ISSUE 417 | NOVEMBER 2012

DRAGON®

A Dungeons & Dragons® Roleplaying Game Supplement

DRAGON®

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DRAGON November 2012

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Agents of Change

By Stan!

As you noticed last month (and as Chris Perkins discussed in October's *Dungeon* editorial), we've made a change in the way the magazines are being presented. Rather than having *Dragon* and *Dungeon* articles appear individually on the D&D® website, we're experimenting with presenting them as a pair of compiled, single-PDF issues.

On the one hand, this harkens back to the good old days when you could buy *Dragon* and *Dungeon* magazines on the newsstand (back when there were such things as newsstands). On the other hand, you might have gotten used to consuming the columns, adventures, and supplemental material in bite-sized nuggets. Either way, things have changed.

Change can be scary—and I don't just mean the big things. Even little changes, like driving a new route to work or trying a new breakfast cereal, can cause some anxiety. (Breakfast is the most important meal of the day, you know.) We like things to stay the way they are, and even when we aren't completely satisfied, we at least are comforted by the familiarity and the predictability. Change means uncertainty, and nothing is scarier than the unknown.

But change is also good. It's what allows us to make improvements. And even if a particular change turns out to be less helpful than we hoped, we can always make a new change to get things back on course. This is as true for publishing a magazine as it is for designing a game. You *are* taking part in the D&D Next playtest, aren't you? It's your chance to be an agent of change for the game we all love.

If you want to be an agent of change for the magazines themselves, that opportunity is available, too. We're currently in the middle of an open submission window for *Dragon* and *Dungeon* article pitches. It will remain open until November 30, so read the submission guidelines and send us your best proposals. Help us make the magazines better by writing the articles you'd like to see in these pages.

In the meantime, we've got a whole month's worth of articles right here in this PDF. Speaking of agents of change, our theme for November is Demons and Devils—creatures that want to change the world (and not for the better). You'll find two History Check articles, one expounding on the Blood War (the epic battle between the Abyss and the Nine Hells), and another revealing the mysteries of the demon lord Tenebrous. There's also an in-depth look at the succubus, complete with a succubus companion just to tempt you further. If demons and devils aren't your thing, no worries—this month's Bazaar of the Bizarre presents a collection of magic dice, in case your character wants to roll up a character of his or her own.

So even with all the changes happening, our monthly lineup of interesting and useful items for your D&D game remains one thing you can count on.

History Check: The Blood War

By Sterling Hershey

Illustration by Mark Winters

This is the latest installment in the continuing series exploring the history of the Dungeons & Dragons® setting. Each History Check article provides new insight into the game's iconic events, organizations, and characters. Sidebars included in the text note the history or related information a character might know about the subject, based on a successful skill check.

This time things take a darker turn with a look at the Blood War, the endless struggle between the fiendish forces of evil. These articles attempt to clarify confusing bits of D&D history, but the history of the Blood War is anything but clear and concise.

The Eternal Struggle

"Please, come in. Have a seat at my table. Do not touch the runes. They will give us some measure of protection from prying and scrying eyes. No, no, merely a precautionary measure.

"I apologize for meeting you in the confines of my humble wagon, but the subject of our discussion is not one for the ears of the meek or innocent. Please close the door and pull the curtains.

"Now, you ask about the Blood War. My advice? Stay away from it. Run away from it. Not possible? Then you must already be involved. You're already fighting the fiends, or worse, working for them. I trust it is the former.

"How do I know so much about the Blood War? I tumbled to the dark of it long ago, as they used to say in a place far from here. To me, you're merely another clueless berk. Don't be offended; most everyone is.

"I am not, as you might have guessed, from around here. I have traveled farther than the Zarovans. They have been generous enough to let me join their clan and use their name. The arrangement suits us both. I

The Zarovans

The narrator of this History Check is a member of the Zarovan tribe of the Vistani. These mysterious gypsylike groups travel the Shadowfell and untold other worlds and lands. During their travels they have learned much, though how many of their tales are true is left to the listener to decide. This article introduces Rovvo Zarovan, an older, wiser, and understandably cautious sage (who is not actually a Zarovan by birth).

More information about the Vistani can be found in *Player's Option: Heroes of Shadow*™, the boxed set *The Shadowfell: Gloomwrought and Beyond*™, and the Vistani articles in *Dragon* 380.

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like to stay on the move, and they find good uses for my sage advice. For a fee, of course. The not-inconsiderable price you paid for my attention compels me to reveal only the truth. As I know it, of course.

"The Blood War is a seemingly eternal struggle between the devils and the demons. Some call them baatezu and tanar'ri, some call them by other names. It makes no difference to the fiends, unless you call them by the wrong names. Most would kill you for the petty insult. Then again, most would simply kill you with no rationale whatsoever. These beings thrive on hatred, slaughter, and the quest for power.

"Their numbers are uncountable. Their types probably are too, but if you encounter them often enough, you'll start to recognize some of the more common varieties. Recognition is useful for adventurers such as yourselves, as long as you don't begin to imagine that such information gives you significant advantages. Foolish warlocks or wizards who've learned the name of a demon or two might think they can entrap fiends or make deals with them, but ultimately they are mistaken. If they're lucky, they simply become pawns in a greater game and might even escape with their lives.

"I digress. Such minor pacts with mortals seldom influence a war that is fought on the infernal planes of existence. They have battle lines numbering in the tens of thousands, sometimes millions, on their chosen battlefields, so any demonic battle or devilish manipulation here in the world is rarely more than a minor skirmish. Probably not even worth a footnote in the history of the war, were any creature keeping track.

"The given reasons for the Blood War are varied and conflicting. No mortal really knows the whole story, and it's unclear if any of the gods do either. Some say the Blood War is an inevitable consequence of their fiendish natures—the regimented devils versus the wildly chaotic demons, each vying for supremacy over the other. There might be a bit of truth to that notion. The devils rise from the Nine Hells, the domain of Baator in the Astral Sea. The demons swarm from the Abyss, way down at the bottom of the Elemental Chaos.

"That's how I've heard the chant lately. Other sages tell a different story and spin a far different concept of planar relationships—more like a great wheel. From a mortal perspective, it's irrelevant: Regardless of classification, the fiends come from places vastly different in location, nature, philosophy, environment, and organization.

"Some say the nature of these beings is only part of the story. They say that one event really ignited the war, spawning epic battles the scale of which the planes had never seen before. Your coin's bought you the tale as I've heard it.

"It goes something like this: The strongest of the devils, the fallen angel Asmodeus, entered the Abyss and stole a shard from the evil seed embedded in the plane's heart. He fashioned it into a ruby-tipped spear and killed his divine master. Now the demons—all the demons—want the shard back and will never stop until it is returned, restoring the power and pride stolen from them.

"Rumors claim that Asmodeus wants to acquire and use the rest of the evil abyssal seed to gain dominance over all of the fiends, and to overthrow the other gods. Naturally, the forces of the Abyss oppose this plan. Demons don't need a reason to hate, but their enmity toward Asmodeus and the devils drives them to greater and greater atrocities.

"A glimpse of one of their battlefields, even the remains of one centuries old, tells the tale. Little can compare to that frightful scene of extreme violence and tortured ground. The battlefields stretch for miles on the plains of Avernus and across the layers of the Abyss."

HISTORY CHECK

A character knows of the existence of the Blood War with a DC 20 Arcana check, History check, or Religion check. A DC 25 check for these skills reveals that the devils and demons fight over ideology and dominance. A DC 40 check reveals the story of Asmodeus and everything above.

Origin of the War

"This legend of Asmodeus and the spear sounds dire enough to spark an eternal war. But let me tell you another tale of the war, a myth that suggests the conflict goes well beyond Asmodeus and his theft. Have you ever heard of the yugoloths? Baernoloths? Of course not. These creatures are lost to legend, if they existed at all. Yet the sages who talk of the great wheel say that the yugoloths were early incarnations of evil that were responsible for the first creation of the devils and demons.

"They say that back when the primal forces of the universe struggled for dominance between good and evil and law and chaos, they battled each other to a stalemate. In an effort to change the game, those forces created minions and followers to act as agents for their causes.

"One side created the baernoloths, creatures of immense wisdom, yet cunning and evil. After eons of study, the baernoloths created the yugoloths as a force to conquer creation for their masters. Or it might be the other way around: Some say baernoloths are complete fabrications of the yugoloths, a myth devised to prove their divine lineage.

"The yugoloths pursued perfection and believed they were the only race capable of reaching that goal. Alas, they perceived their ambition thwarted by the

forces of law and chaos. The most advanced yugoloth, the first ultroloth, devised a solution. That being created a magical stone called the *Heart of Darkness* and used it to purge law and chaos from the yugoloths.

"The yugoloths claim they had attained purity after using the stone. But their pure, perfect evil was not without consequence. All that had been purged from their natures became a sort of primordial larvae that grew into imperfect and impure versions of the yugoloths. The ultroloth drove these abominations away. Those with a lawful bent found a home in Baator, while the chaotic were drawn to the Abyss. These cast-off creatures became the multitude of demons and devils we know and fear today. The yugoloths mysteriously withdrew, though some became mercenaries. They still held great sway over their outcast brethren. Some say they secretly guide the Blood War.

"Of course, the devils and demons believe none of this yugoloth propaganda. They claim to be native creations of their respective planes, beholden to no one, created by no greater force. Like most other creatures, I doubt they really know for sure where they came from.

"I told you that tale so you might understand this one. Remember that I said mere mortals rarely influence the Blood War in any meaningful way? If this story is true, it would be one such rare instance.

"After centuries had passed, the yugoloths decided that it was time to bring their wayward creations back under their control. Understanding the enormity of the task, they devised a plan to force loyalty from the demons and devils. In times past, one of the fiends' great advantages was the ability to teleport between the planes. Most believed that this was a natural magical or innate ability. Only the yugoloths knew the real reason, because they secretly granted it.

"The yugoloths controlled a mysterious creature called the Maeldur Et Kavurik. It, in turn, controlled a kind of teleportation matrix. If a being's name was known to the Maeldur, that creature could teleport anywhere he, she, or it wished without difficulty. The 'loths had whispered the names of every demon and devil to the Maeldur.

"The yugoloths devised a plan to erase the Maeldur's memory, but before they could carry it out, a devil raid captured the Maeldur and whisked it away. The devils didn't know about the plan, and they did not know exactly what they had stolen. The yugoloths knew it would be only a matter of time before the devils figured it out, mostly because no newly formed demons or devils would be able to teleport.

"The yugoloths, ever the string-pullers and wary of revealing themselves, manipulated the situation to send a group of mortals to carry the plan forward. After an arduous journey to locate the Maeldur—itself a heroic tale, including a reported meeting with a baernoloth and a trip to the Abyss—the mortals eventually succeeded, as they so often do despite impossible odds. A group of adventurers found the Maeldur on a massive wheeled fortress called *The Relentless,* which rolled across Maladomini, the Seventh Hell.

"Once they'd reached the Maeldur, the tales say the adventurers convinced, persuaded, or guilted the creature into dunking itself in the River Styx. Cleverly, they told the Maeldur its own name and it teleported itself into the waters. The Maeldur Et Kavurik forgot all the names it had ever known, stripping the demons and devils of one of their fundamental powers. Some say the yugoloths retrieved the Maeldur and now tell it only their own names and the names of those who swear loyalty to them. The Maeldur doesn't remember events before it dropped into the River Styx, so it was easily manipulated into its old role.

"Is any of this true? Possibly. The Blood War rages on, but it seems . . . quieter than in the old tales. The inability of the fiends to teleport to each others' planes could be a reason for the decline. But by now the demons and devils have discovered other ways to traverse the planes, and they can still teleport short distances without difficulty. This tale merely illuminates the ability of mortals to make a great difference in the right situation.

"Of course, I should also point out that while the adventurers might have had lofty goals, they were still manipulated by the fiends. It's hard to stay neutral in the Blood War, either by choice or by circumstance."

HISTORY CHECK

These are very obscure tales. A character knows the story of the Maeldur with a DC 40 History check or Arcana check. A character knows the yugoloth story with a DC 45 History check or Religion check. Only the Dungeon Master can say with accuracy if these tales are true in his or her campaign world.

The Conflict Continues

"The intensity of the Blood War ebbs and flows over time. Battles have raged for millennia across Baator's portal-plane of Avernus or on the fringes where the Elemental Chaos meets the Abyss proper. At other times, like during these past few centuries, there is comparatively little fighting. Both sides seem more concerned with their own internal politics and power struggles than planning an invasion that would weaken their forces.

"Some say that Asmodeus has declared victory in the Blood War and moved on to other concerns. Such a unilateral declaration seems unlikely to hold, since I doubt the demons would willingly give up just because the devils have stopped attacking them.

"Of course, even a minor skirmish would look like a major war to mortal eyes. Even though the fighting is lessened, it is by no means over. Instead, the fiends have temporarily traded their massive armies and brute forces for influence peddling in the mortal world.

"On the other hand, it might be that Asmodeus is holding steady and building his power structure and forces. He could be setting up long-range plans and operations, while gathering strength for a mighty invasion of the Abyss. The way things work on the planes, that could take centuries. Or it could happen tomorrow if he thinks he is strong enough.

"For now, he can afford to wait. The demon princes never cease their internal squabbling. They are fully engulfed in their petty arguments, power struggles, and outright jealousy of each others' domains. Although they lack the motivation to invade the Hells, the sheer number of demons makes any strike against the Abyss difficult.

"This relative peace has been in place for several lifetimes now. For the mortal world, it is both a blessing and a hardship. Less fighting means it is less likely that a sudden horde of warring devils and demons might erupt in any given location—such as a nexus of evil in the world. It also means that fewer mortals are enslaved into an infernal army, taken off to slaughter.

"On the other hand, the fact that each side is taking a bigger interest in mortal affairs increases their interference and manipulation of events in our own world. Mortals have little defense, except to be ever-cautious and wary. With complacency you either become a pawn in a centuries-spanning plot, or a target of opportunity.

"If you must get involved or can't avoid being drawn in, let me give you a few tips. I can't guarantee you'll survive, but I've always been willing to help out a clueless berk. Yes, for a fee. So good of you to mention that.

"First, if you think you know what you're dealing with, research it. If you have a name or a type of demon or devil, look it up with your local sage, master of the arcane, or major religious library. The information might not always be accurate, but it can be revealing.

"Next, test the story if at all possible. Fiends are liars and manipulators. They'll peel you quick if you're not wary. Well, even if you are.

"If you're traveling to the Nine Hells or the Abyss: Don't. If you must, *research*. Learn how to survive there, before the nearest fiend impales you or tears you apart on sight. The infernal planes are nothing like the mortal world. Even if you're familiar with one level or layer, the next might look completely different except for the fact that they're all *deadly*. Get in, take care of your business, and get out as fast as you can.

"Finally, reconsider your options. Don't get involved if you don't have to. You'll live longer. Once you make an enemy of a powerful fiend, you will never escape its ire.

"Now, go. I could talk endlessly about the details and tell you story after story, but I have other appointments to keep. Just remember, the fiends pull the strings of the Blood War, and it's hard to tell which ones and for what reasons. They could have already set you on a path they desire. Now that I think about it, I might not be as hidden as I'd hoped. It would not surprise me if we eventually discover we're all playing our appointed roles in some fiendish plot."

HISTORY CHECK

A character knows the current status of the Blood War (that it is less active than usual) with a DC 25 History check, Arcana check, or Religion check. Knowing why the Blood War is less intense at the moment requires a DC 30 History check, Arcana check, or Religion check. Understanding some of the precautions needed when dealing with the Blood War participants or locations requires a DC 30 History check, Arcana check, or Religion check.

About the Author

Sterling Hershey is an architect and freelance game designer. He was one of the designers of *Monster Vault™: Threats to the Nentir Vale™* and contributes to *D&D Insider*. Sterling has worked extensively in a galaxy far, far away, designing many *Star Wars Roleplaying Game* and *Star Wars Miniatures* game books and products.

Bazaar of the Bizarre:
Magic Dice

By Alana Joli Abbott

Illustration by Hector Ortiz

Adventurers are gamblers by nature. They risk glory and honor rather than simple coin. They put their lives on the line every time they go on a quest.

For many adventurers, that urge doesn't fade when they're relaxing at a tavern. In such places, they might engage in a game of cards or dice. Although many games (high and low, evens and odds, or dodge the snake, to name a few) are restricted to six-siders, others involve a series of strangely shaped polyhedrals. Many of those dice are numbered on each side; others have pips representing their count; still others bear sigils or runes that contain meanings for particular games.

Some dice, whether marked by pips or percentiles, are imbued with a power greater than that of chance. Many gamblers have long believed that their dice possess supernatural luck and would never fail them in a moment of need. In most cases, that belief is mere superstition. But sometimes real magic lies behind the outcome of a game or an adventure.

Lucky Bag o' Bones

Over the course of many journeys, an adventurer (or a gambler of the more mundane sort) is likely to collect a bag of dice for making wagers at a pub. Most taverns that run dice games have staff ready at hand to make sure that no one's shakers are loaded.

The *lucky bag o' bones* is full of what appear to be ordinary bone dice. In fact, when used in a game of chance, the dice perform exactly as expected. They roll randomly, holding the heat and sweat of their owner in their carved shapes.

Away from the game table, however, the *lucky bag o' bones* reveals its true nature. Perhaps the owner rattles the dice for good fortune right before attempting a difficult task. Maybe a silent stroke of the dice serves as a prayer to the gods of luck. Something in the movement of the dice brings about a true lucky effect: that difficult task becomes a tiny bit easier, and the gods of luck smile down on the owner.

Lucky Bag o' Bones Level 6 Uncommon

This leather pouch is filled with what appear to be common dice, made of bone and painted with black pips.

Wondrous Item 1,800 gp

Utility Power ✦ Daily (Minor Action)

Effect: You gain a +2 power bonus to the first skill check you make before the end of your next turn.

Four-Sided Caltrop

The four-sided die has often made its presence known with a sharp stab to the foot after it has been dropped under the gambling table. The pyramid shape might make that tetrahedral terror easy to discover, but it also makes a gambler curse that the sharp dice are no mere tools but weapons in disguise.

The origin of the *four-sided caltrop* is unknown. Was the magic die created by a gambling wizard's curse? Was it a clever adventurer's way of hiding a weapon in with more mundane gear? Regardless,

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the conversion of those small, pointy dice into useful obstacles to deter foes has been a boon to adventurers in the field ever since.

Carved from smoky quartz, the *four-sided caltrop* has a center that appears to be moving. At a gaming table, this might be explained as a trick of the light or the skill of the carver. In truth, that movement is the magic waiting to be released. When the *four-sided caltrop* is thrown, the quartz cracks, and the magic is spent.

Four-Sided Caltrop Level 3 Uncommon

This small pyramid is carved from smoky quartz, but upon closer inspection, it appears to be filled with viscous liquid.

Consumable: Other 30 gp

Utility Power (Zone) ✦ **Consumable** (Minor Action)

Effect: Area burst 1 within 5 squares. The burst creates a zone that lasts until the end of the encounter. When a creature enters the zone or starts its turn there, the creature is slowed (save ends).

Midnight Sixes

When a pair of six-sided playing dice roll a total of 12, the result is called midnight. That hour is often thought to embody bad luck, so the high result is countered by the superstitious gambler referring to the total as an ill omen.

The *midnight sixes* are a pair of loaded dice, so luck has nothing to do with their result. A clever gambler keeps them out of sight of a tavern bouncer who might confiscate them. Like most loaded dice, the *midnight sixes* should be secreted on the person, typically near the wrist, where a proper flick of the hand might bring them into play on the table.

Midnight Sixes Level 6 Common

These six-sided dice look innocent, but when rolled, they often come up a winner.

Wondrous Item 1,800 gp

Property

When you roll these dice, you can mentally command them to roll any desired result.

Gambler's Eight

Tourmaline is a prized gemstone, due in no small part to the fact that the superstitious and those who study the arcane properties of precious stones both say that it can intensify luck. It is most commonly a black stone, but sometimes it appears dark green, hazy brown, deep red, or as a combination of pale pink and green.

Due to tourmaline's properties, the eight-sided dwarven die known as a *gambler's eight* is almost always made from this lucky stone. The die is usually black and marked with the dwarven runes for the numbers 1 through 8. Dwarves know that the die is put to its best use beyond the game table. While the owner of a *gambler's eight* carries the die, he or she can invoke its power to improve the outcome of an event before that outcome has been revealed. Fate sometimes needs a little push in the right direction, and the *gambler's eight* becomes the vehicle for that push.

Gambler's Eight Level 14 Uncommon

This eight-sided die, carved from tourmaline, is painted with dwarven runes.

Wondrous Item 21,000 gp

Utility Power ✦ Daily (Free Action)

Trigger: You make an attack roll, a skill check, or an ability check and dislike the result.

Effect: You add 1d8 to the triggering roll.

Raven Tens

Druids have long associated the gift of augury with ravens. Thus, obsidian, which is translucent when held up to the light but black as a raven's feather when held in the hand, represents looking into the future. Dice and bones have also been associated with telling fortunes and predicting the future. Like casting bones, throwing dice is said to show what might transpire if a certain course of action is followed.

Raven tens draw on all those supernatural associations. The dice are carved from obsidian, and their ten sides bear an equal number of two symbols: a raven's head, which represents knowledge, weal, and good fortune; and a raven's talon, which represents risk and danger. When asked a question and thrown, the dice reveal the outcome of a certain course of action to be risky (talons on both dice), neutral (talon on one die and head on the other), or worth the reward (heads on both).

Like other auguries, the answer revealed on *raven tens* is a matter of interpretation. The dice make assumptions based on relative value rather than bodily harm. If a course of action requires more resources than the reward will be worth, even if the danger to the owner and any allies is not great, the dice advise against the act. *Raven tens* are also unconcerned with ethereal rewards, such as glory and honor, or loyalty to king and country. Instead, the focus is more practical and most reliably predicts financial gain.

Raven Tens Level 5 Uncommon

This pair of ten-sided dice, carved from obsidian, is painted with two symbols: a raven's talon, representing risk, and a raven's head, representing reward.

Wondrous Item 1,000 gp

Power ✦ Daily

Requirement: You must use this power during a short or extended rest.

Effect: You ask a specific question about a possible course of action and roll the dice. If the risk involved is likely to outweigh the benefit of the action, both dice come up talons. If the reward is certainly worth the risk, both dice come up heads. If the risk and reward weigh equally, and the endeavor might only break even, the dice come up with one face a head and the other face a talon.

Shape of the Multiverse

Philosophers have long argued about the true arrangement of the multiverse. Some sects propose that the entirety of the multiverse, and all the realms contained within it, would take polyhedral form if

viewed from the outside. The truth remains a mystery, but legends tell of a twelve-sided die, the *shape of the multiverse*, that has some ability to rewrite reality.

This fabulous amethyst die is rumored to allow its owner to alter recent history to suit his or her desire. When the owner or an ally is hit by an enemy attack, for example, the *shape of the multiverse* can turn back the movement of the spheres for a moment, forcing the foe to make the attack a second time. If the owner or an ally fails at a crucial moment, the *shape of the multiverse* can rewrite that moment, allowing a second chance for success.

Playing with the fabric of reality can have dangerous consequences; it is possible that the second time an action occurs, its result will be worse for the owner. Therein lies the risk of the die and the gamble with the way it falls.

Shape of the Multiverse Level 20 Uncommon

This dodecahedron, carved from amethyst, initially appears to have numbered sides. On second glance, stars and spirals swirl within it.

Wondrous Item 125,000 gp

Utility Power ✦ Daily (Free Action)

Trigger: You or a creature within 10 squares of you makes an attack roll, skill check, or saving throw and dislikes the result.

Effect: The triggering creature must reroll and take the second result.

Stone of Detection

Some dice seem so eager to be involved in a game that they practically roll themselves. The *stone of detection* is one such die. If released, even on a flat surface, it rolls toward the nearest hidden object or creature, whether that object is disguised, invisible, or just out of plain sight. The twenty-sided die, made from aquamarine—a semiprecious stone known for deflecting worries—stops when it is adjacent to the hidden object or creature.

The stone bears etchings of three symbols: the runes for happiness, hope, and danger. If the die lands on the happiness rune, the hidden object is a treasure or of benefit to the die's owner. If the *stone of detection* lands on hope, the hidden object or creature is neutral; it might be a secret door or a creature that could be either ally or enemy. The danger rune points to hazards, traps, or enemies in disguise. The *stone of detection* is the bane of spies at a gambling table since it identifies them as having a hidden identity.

Although useful, the *stone of detection* has limits. It stops adjacent to a hidden object or creature, but it does not reveal what is hidden. If a rogue rolls the die and it comes up danger, the rogue still must find and disable the trap or hazard.

Stone of Detection Level 16 Rare

When placed on a flat surface, this twenty-sided die, carved from aquamarine, rolls of its own accord. It is decorated with the runic characters for happiness, hope, and danger.

Wondrous Item 45,000 gp

Properties

- ✦ You gain a +4 item bonus to Perception checks made to detect traps or secret passages.
- ✦ You gain a +4 item bonus to Insight checks made to detect illusions or disguises.

Utility Power ✦ Daily (Standard Action)

Effect: Close burst 10. The die rolls toward the nearest hidden or concealed trap, passage, or treasure in the burst (DM's discretion). If it lands with the danger rune showing, the hidden object is a trap or hazard. If the roll result is hope, the die rests near a secret passage or door. If the roll result is happiness, an object of value is near the die's resting location. You gain a +5 power bonus to your next Perception check to find the creature or object indicated by the die.

FICKLE FINGER OF FATE

Regardless of their magical benefits, dice are connected to chaos, luck, and random odds. By their nature, they have no loyalty, and one owner is as good as the next. Although the magic dice described in this article are not sentient, their strong connection to fate means that they stay in motion rather than remaining long in one place. Sometimes this movement is brought about because the dice are confiscated by authorities (such as the city guard or tavern bouncers). Confiscated dice are rarely destroyed and eventually wind up in the pockets of other gamblers looking for luck.

Sometimes the dice are the target of theft. Do they have an aura that makes them attractive to those of the light-fingered profession? An arcanist would almost certainly say no, but magic dice do have a reputation for being stolen more frequently than other magic objects do.

Finally, the dice have a habit of going missing. An adventurer might use a *lucky bag o' bones* for years, then discover that the dice have disappeared. On rare occasions, they turn up weeks later. More often, the dice simply vanish without a trace.

About the Author

Alana Joli Abbott has written several adventure scenarios for RPGA® campaigns, from *Living Kingdoms of Kalamar* to *Xen'drik Expeditions* and the *Living* FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting, as well as fiction, comics, and history articles. When Alana is not rewriting Greek or Norse mythology in her home games, she blogs about writing and mythology on her home page at www.VirgilandBeatrice.com.

History Check: The Shadow That Was

By Derek Guder

Illustration by Noah Bradley

The Dungeons & Dragons game has a long tradition of memorable heroes, villains, locations, groups, and cataclysmic events. The History Check series of articles explores these stories, providing a fresh perspective for long-time gamers and a grounding in history for those new to the game.

The multiverse-spanning Planescape® setting, designed for the 2nd Edition game, covered a lot of ground and gave another dimension to many elements of established D&D lore. This article examines the life of the dark undead god Tenebrous, the vengeful shadow that arose from the demise of the mighty demon lord Orcus. Throughout the text, sidebars point out what adventurers might know based on successful skill checks.

Deities and Death

"What happens when a god dies?

"I can't blame you for asking. It's something everyone wonders at some point. Or at least, the smart ones who are just a bit too clever for their own good.

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"Ol' Barmy Ildan"

The narrator of this History Check calls himself Ildan. Beyond that, he doesn't have much to say about himself . . . at least not directly. The opinions that come through in his storytelling, however, are reminiscent of the teachings of the Athar—a former faction in Sigil, dating back to the time before all such organizations were banned from the City of Doors. The Athar believed that the creatures called "gods" are not never-changing, ineffable beings, but merely entities that have achieved a greater level of power and are still as fallible as mortals.

Ildan makes his home in Sigil's Lower Ward, near the piece of devastated property known as the Shattered Temple. That said, he goes where he pleases, so this encounter with him can occur practically anywhere.

"You think everything ends with the Shadowfell? That's there's nothing beyond the Astral, the great Silver Void? You've got a lot to learn, my clueless friend. But that's why you're here, isn't it? You've heard from someone who heard from someone who overheard in a tavern that ol' barmy Ildan knows the secrets of how to kill gods—and bring them back to life.

"Ha! As if any mortal knows how to do that. Or any god, for that matter. Plenty of gods *think* they do, of course. They lay grand plans, formulate epic conspiracies, and devise foolproof ways to defeat their enemies once and for all. Do these plans ever work? Dark of it is, I've collected more tales of godly 'death' than any other blood I've ever met, and only one thing is clear: The so-called divine powers and death never mix predictably.

"Study the supremely powerful long enough, and you realize they struggle with and scheme against death just like any 'mortal' does, and then you begin to realize the central truth of the multiverse. As an example, let me tell you about one legend—one that starts with a name you might recognize."

Orcus Falls, but His Wand Lives On

"Orcus was a bloated demonic god of undeath. He had sat unchallenged on his throne too long, growing fat and dull and lazy. I'm not sure just how 'dull' a being like that can ever really be, but I suppose it's all relative when you're effectively immortal.

"In any event, he eventually grew complacent enough to fall to the machinations of Kiaransalee, a drow goddess of vengeance and a rival for Orcus's preeminence over undeath. She deposed the corpulent corpse-king and usurped his realm, destroying his servants and wiping his very name from the cosmos.

"Gods and their toys being what they are, though, she did not utterly destroy everything Orcus had crafted. She couldn't bring herself to shatter his infamous wand, so she tasked two mortal drow with secreting it away in the impenetrable depths of Agathion, the fourth layer of the plane of Pandemonium—

"You want me to stop and explain 'layers' and 'planes'? Bar that, prime. That's a whole other story and much too involved for this little chat. You're going to need to buy me a lot more bub to get me to sit around long enough for that.

"As I was saying, Kiaransalee sent two of her mortal worshipers to hide this incredibly powerful artifact of her defeated foe where no one would ever find it. And then, just to make sure, she drowned both of them in the River Styx, ensuring that not only were they dead (and thus unlikely to spill the beans) but that even if someone did bring them back, the poor sods still wouldn't know where they'd put the thing.

"If only she had actually destroyed the wand. That's the thing that always stands out about these stories of god-slaying: some ineffable quality of the divine makes it near impossible to wipe away every last piece of them, and that's always how they come back.

"But I'm getting ahead of myself. Not destroying the wand was just Kiaransalee's first mistake. Her second and third were, arguably, allowing both of the dead mortals to be resurrected. She permitted the one named Erehe to be returned to his existence as a consort to a mortal priestess in the Vault of the Drow. The other one, Kestod, she reanimated as a vampire. How did she not perceive the possible ramifications of these actions? Apparently *she* got a bit fat and dull and lazy during her time on Orcus's throne."

One God Is Born, and Another Dies

"Some time after Orcus was vanquished—no one can seem to agree on how long—something stirred on the demon's corpse as it floated in the Silver Void. That's

History Check

With a DC 25 History check or a DC 20 Religion check, a character knows about the conflict between Kiaransalee and Orcus. A DC 30 History check or Religion check is necessary to know about the mortal drow hiding the *Wand of Orcus* in Agathion and the subsequent fates of these drow.

what you call the Astral Sea, you know, where the corpses of gods go to rot.

"Some portion of the corpse must have been infused with negative energy, because a new entity emerged—an *undead* god who opened his eyes and beheld his gaunt, shadowy form. By all reports, he looked like a creature that had been squeezed until all the light had been wrung out of him, leaving only darkness.

"This new shadowy undead god, calling himself Tenebrous, stumbled through the planes until he reached Yggdrasil, the World Ash. He tried to summon his servants, the former minions of Orcus, and only then found out that Kiaransalee had been thorough with her purge, and nearly all of those servants were dead.

"Tenebrous lacked the full power of a god and couldn't resurrect his former servants, but he discovered that he could reanimate them. He created new undead horrors he called visages: demonic undead made of shadows and masks, able to control the perceptions of those around them and even to take on the forms and lives of their victims.

"The undead god hid in the great boughs of the World Ash, in a small town named Crux. He also maintained a fortress in a place called Tcian Sumere, inside the realm of negative energy. In every way he could, the undead shadow began to reach out across the multiverse in his own quest for vengeance and power.

"Tenebrous unearthed a terrible secret in Pelion, the layer of Arborea where the dust of ancient civilizations that have been lost to time and memory forms great white deserts. In the last spire of a forgotten temple, Tenebrous found the True Words, utterances of power predating the gods. These True Words would consume any mortal foolish enough to try to learn them. Not quite a god but certainly not a mortal either, Tenebrous learned the Last Word, the ultimate magic of unmaking, its utterance powerful enough to slay even a god. Armed with this weapon, he could finally set about searching for his wand in earnest.

"I say 'in earnest' because Tenebrous knew, as he took the knowledge of the Last Word within himself, that he could not survive indefinitely in this condition. Unless he recovered the wand in time, the roiling energy of the Last Word would eat him away from the inside. So he set out with murderous purpose.

"Early in these travels, Tenebrous invaded the ordered plane of Mechanus and used the Last Word on Primus, god of the modrons. The shadow took the dead modron god's place and sent the race out on an unscheduled march. A great mechanical horde poured out across the multiverse to observe and report back to their leader. In this way, Tenebrous gained knowledge that enabled him to continue his search for the wand."

The Death Toll Mounts

"Tenebrous didn't stop at consuming one god in his desperate hunt for the wand—a number of other deities fell before the onslaught of the Last Word.

"He was misled into believing that Bwimb, baron of a realm of ooze, possessed the wand. Tenebrous swiftly obliterated that . . . individual.

"Then he killed Maanzecorian, the illithid god of secrets, after that creature turned out to be another dead end. In similar fashion and for the same reason, Camaxtli, a god of fate that claimed to know all secrets, was also consumed by Tenebrous's rage.

"Of all his victims, Tomeri, the serene god of wisdom and love, proved the biggest challenge. She alone kept her wits about her as Tenebrous assailed her realm, and, not allowing panic to cloud her tactics, put up the strongest resistance. The cruel shadow ultimately took great pride in that victory.

History Check

Characters know about the unscheduled Modron March and the death of Primus with a DC 30 History check, Religion check, or Arcana check. A DC 35 Religion check or Arcana check is required for knowledge of the nature of the visages.

"In the meantime, the mind-warping visages searched for any sign of the wand and built a network of spies and agents across the planes.

"And so the deadly shadow finally learned of the two drow who had hidden his wand in Pandemonium, and Tenebrous began to hunt for them. He also needed a way to offset the effects of the Styx on their memories, and for that he had to harvest the blossom of *desert's night*, a plant that grows only in Set's realm in the Nine Hells. He captured the vampire named Kestod, but the creature killed himself before his memories could be restored. In the Vault of the Drow, the wizard Erehe was in the center of a civil war that was tearing the drow stronghold apart. Surrounded by powerful forces, Erehe was nevertheless a target for any who had learned about his involvement with the wand.

"Through some or all of these sources, Tenebrous finally located where the wand had been hidden in the lowest reaches of Pandemonium—but when he got to Agathion, he was too late. Someone had snatched the artifact and given him the laugh. Without the wand, he could not stave off the corrosive effect of the Last Word, and so he died. Again."

HISTORY CHECK

Knowledge of the deities that died during Tenebrous's rampage requires a DC 20 History check or Religion check. Knowing that Tenebrous was behind it is a bit trickier, raising the DC for both checks to 30. A DC 20 History check or Dungeoneering check is sufficient to know about the civil war in the Vault of the Drow. Knowledge of *desert's night* and its power to restore memories lost to the Styx requires a DC 35 Religion check.

Wand and Wielder Are Reunited

"And if you think that's the end of the story, you haven't been paying much attention, have you? Has my point gotten across? No? Then let me continue.

"Quah-Nomag, one of Orcus's last remaining mortal worshipers, had remained faithful even though his god's death robbed him of his spells. Now, the ogre-blooded priest had acquired the wand and also located the bloated corpse of Orcus, still tainted with the shadow of Tenebrous, drifting through the Astral Sea. At the culmination of a profane resurrection ritual, the miles-long corpse simply disappeared, vanishing from the void.

"At first, it wasn't clear if Quah-Nomag had succeeded or not. At least, not until Orcus suddenly reappeared and reclaimed his domain. In his hand was the mighty *Wand of Orcus*. Kiaransalee was nowhere to be found on or near his throne; apparently she had not grown so complacent that she could be taken by surprise, and it didn't take a lofty intellect to realize there was no gain to be had by confronting a restored Orcus in possession of his wand.

"Now, there has been debate as to how successful Quah-Nomag's ritual actually was. Orcus has certainly returned, but some question remains whether he has been returned to his full power. Some claim that he is now 'just' a demon lord—no longer a full-fledged god. Others say that the *Wand of Orcus* was damaged or even destroyed, and Orcus had to invest much of his power to remake it. A few even whisper that when Orcus was reborn yet again, whatever vestige of his divine spark that had given form to Tenebrous remained behind, and that the shadow's essence is still out there somewhere on the planes. I've communicated with arcanists who claim they can channel and bind the power of the entity they call the Shadow That Was.

"Again, that's all relative. When dealing with powers like these, there is no such thing as a lesser god unless you are a greater one. Orcus has returned, whatever the particulars may be, and he is hungry and ambitious—no longer a complacent corpse-lord content to lounge on a throne of death.

"And that's enough rattling of my bone-box. Thanks for the bub, cutter, but I think I'll be on my way. If you're this interested in how gods die, I don't think I want to spend too much more time in your company. . . ."

Adventure Hooks

A Dungeon Master who wants to cast the shadow of Tenebrous across his or her campaign can make use of the following hooks and ideas.

- Tenebrous's use of the Last Word taught Orcus the power of words and names. In his hunt for the Raven Queen's name, he searches for the power of the True Words again. Do the gods unite against him, fearful of a repeat of Tenebrous's killing spree? Or did Orcus learn some uncharacteristic subtlety during his time as a shadow? The characters will need to locate the Words first and determine how to safeguard them (paragon tier), or even try to use them themselves, knowing that—as mortals—they will pay the final cost (epic tier).
- Cults to Tenebrous are popping up across the land, claiming to tap into some so-called vestige of the Shadow That Was. What does this mean for other gods, good and bad, that have fallen since the dawn of time? The characters could work to stop the members of a cult from returning their dead, mad god to life (paragon tier), or they could undertake a quest to return a god to life themselves, seeking to repair the damage of the Dawn War (epic tier).
- Tenebrous has become something of a patron god for god-slaying zealots. Perhaps these zealots just follow his example ("It's metaphorical; all gods must die for mortals to live free!"), or perhaps they are a more far-reaching and ambitious cult (paragon tier).
- Some great primal spirits stir, take notice of Tenebrous's god-slaying rampage, and set out to learn the True Words themselves—thus enabling them to cleanse the multiverse of meddling divine power (epic tier).

HISTORY CHECK

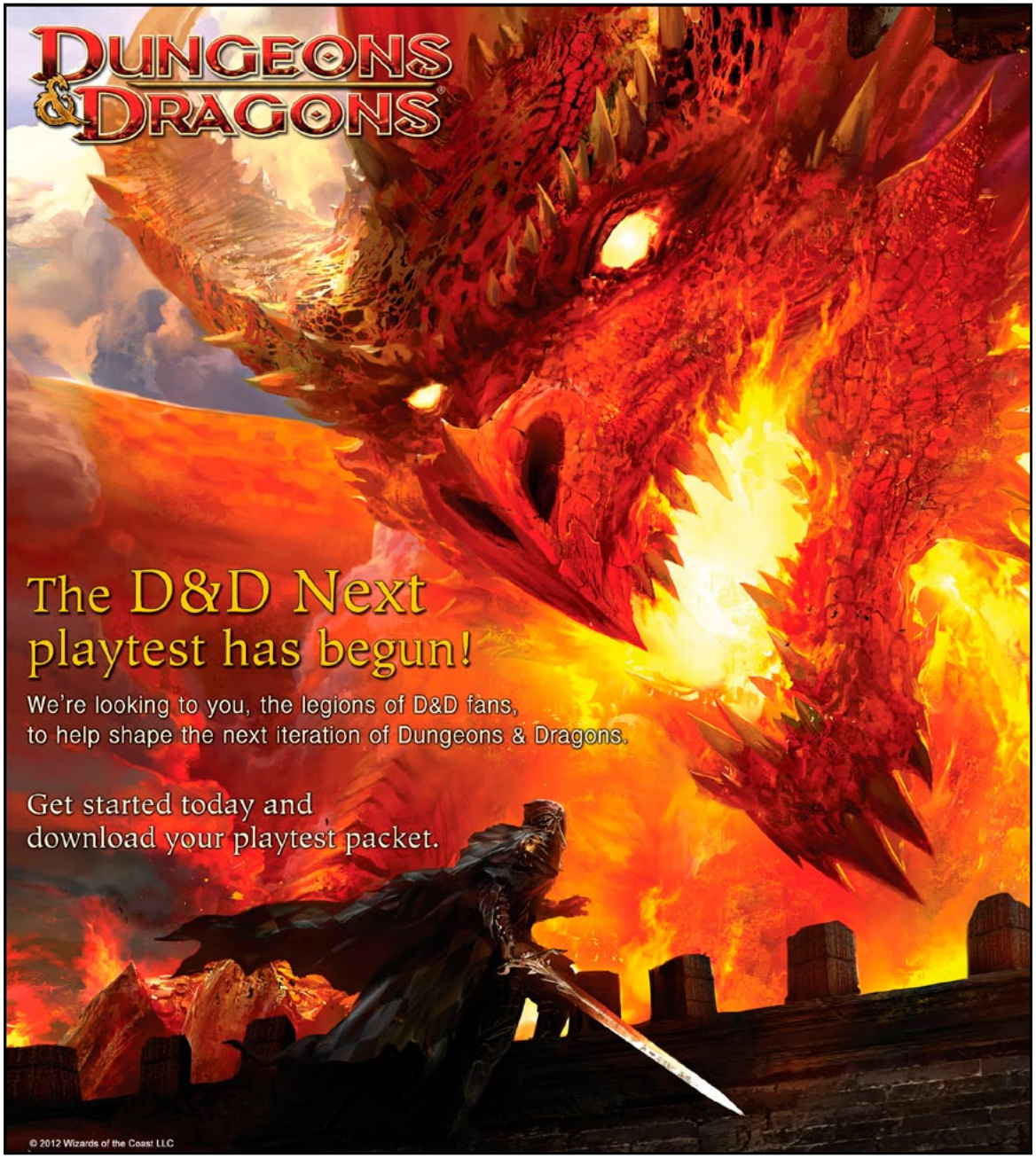
A DC 25 History check or Religion check is required to know any details about Orcus's return, including Quah-Nomag's involvement. Knowledge of any remaining vestiges of Tenebrous's power requires a DC 30 Arcana check or DC 35 Religion check.

For More Inspiration . . .

The story of Tenebrous as recounted here is drawn primarily from the Planescape mega-adventure *Dead Gods*, published in 1997. The death of Primus is the event that triggers another Planescape adventure, *The Great Modron March*. More depth and detail about Tenebrous as the Shadow That Was can be found in the 3rd Edition sourcebook *Tome of Magic*™.

About the Author

Derek Guder is the event programming manager at Gen Con, where he does his best to juggle thousands of events. He has written a few articles for *D&D Insider* and helps coordinate *Ashes of Athas*, a living campaign for the Dark Sun® setting. He is vocal and vulgar on Twitter @frequentbeef.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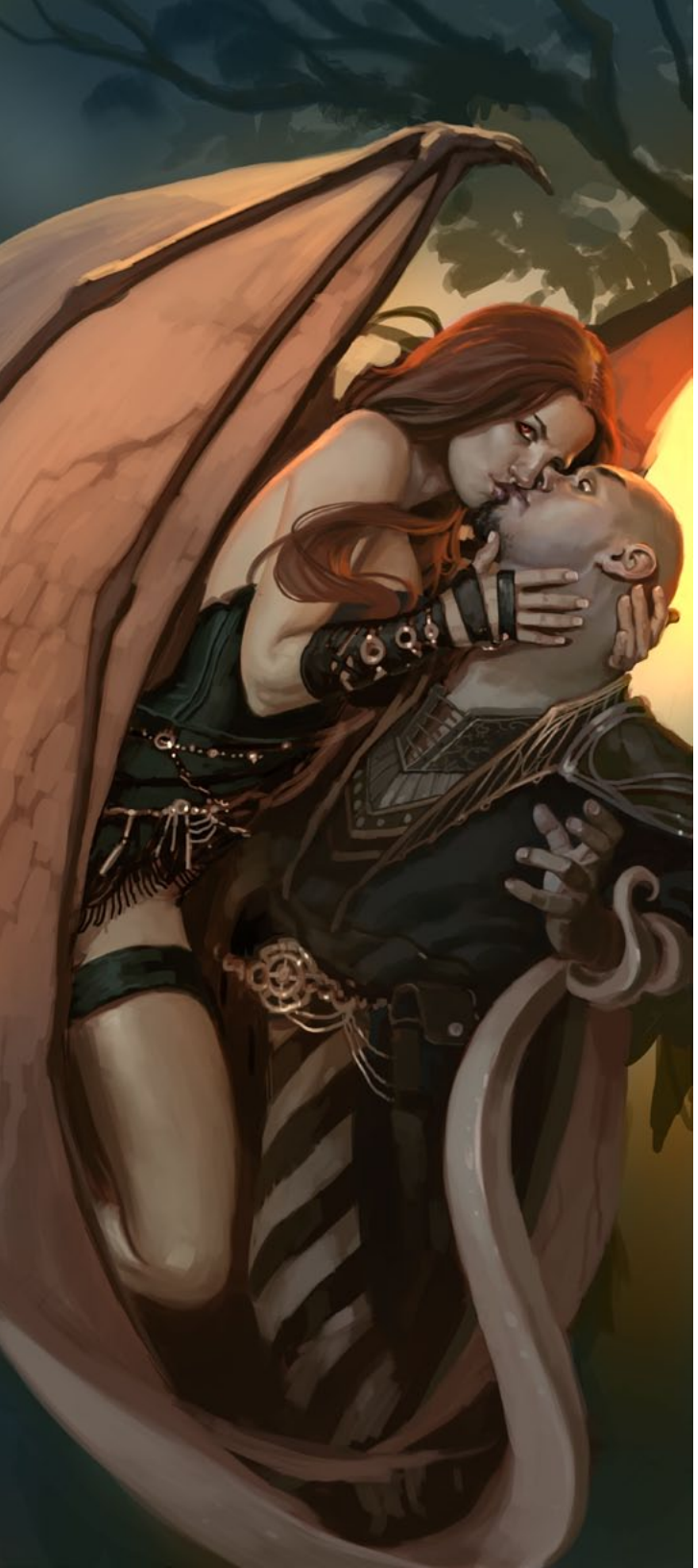

Fallen Angels

Ecology of the Succubus

By Steve Townshend

Illustration by Mark Winters

From the dark recesses of dreams, the succubus calls. As the conscious mind slumbers, she sings her siren song to mortal souls, awakening the wild, forbidden desires that lurk within them in the daylight hours.

The souls she calls all come to her at last. They seek her out in sleep, drawn like slavering dogs on a scent. At the center of the dream she shimmers to life, a dark angel clad in a gown of gossamer night. Not even the blackest shadows can conceal the pale curves of her moon-white flesh that promises pleasure beyond compare. In dreams there are no witnesses to the indulgence of secret desires or broken taboos, no consequences but ecstasy. No repercussions but the steady, blissful erosion of a mortal soul.

Angels of Love

In the beginning, creatures known as angels of love served the gods as heralds and messengers, comforting the despairing, loveless, or forsaken mortals for whom the gods had great plans. They directed the passions of mortals at the gods' behest, pairing wandering hearts lost among the confusion of courting. With a single chaste kiss, an angel of love fulfilled all mortal desires, purifying the heart and cleansing the spirit of the woeful travails of the world.

Though they revered the gods that they were made to serve, the angels of love also held great admiration for other beings, particularly the archangel Asmodeus. An angelic paragon of chastity and virtue, Asmodeus had been chosen above all other servants of the gods to guard the prison of the Chained God, and there was no being in all creation that could question his dedication, his loyalty, or his honor.

So when Asmodeus appeared before the angels of love, the angels heeded him as they would hearken to the gods themselves. Asmodeus showed them a vision of a cosmos where he had vanquished the evil of the Abyss, where the angels of love dwelled in shining astral paradises, granting their boundless love and compassion to all they wished—not merely to those the gods esteemed worthy of favor. The archangel showed them his vision of an ordered universe united under his own benevolent rule, where there were no divisions or conflicts—only endless virtue, eternal love, and ultimate freedom such as only the gods could know.

The angels of love knew that to covet what belonged to the gods was forbidden, but Asmodeus was the wisest and best of all the angelic host, and his deeds and virtues in service of the gods were as old as time, innumerable as the stars. Though many of the angels of love turned away from Asmodeus, more remained at his side, tempted by his idyllic vision. In time, these angels joined Asmodeus's rebellion against the gods. But when Asmodeus slew the deity he served, the gods condemned his legions of rebels and imprisoned them in the astral paradise they had seized. Here the succubi were born.

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Angel of Love	**Level 9 Controller (Leader)**
Medium immortal humanoid (angel)	XP 400
HP 90; **Bloodied** 45	**Initiative** +9
AC 25, **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 21	**Perception** +5
Speed 6, fly 8	
Resist 10 radiant	
Traits	
Angelic Presence	
While the angel is not bloodied, attack rolls against it take a -2 penalty.	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Pacifying Touch** ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +14 vs. AC	
Hit: The target is immobilized until the end of its next turn.	
⊛ **Radiant Beam** (radiant) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +12 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 3d6 + 7 radiant damage.	
⸸ **Love's Kiss** (charm) ✦ **Recharge** when no creature is subject to this power	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. Will	
Hit: The target cannot attack the angel, and on each of its turns, the target must use a move action to move as close to the angel as possible. This effect lasts until the angel ends its turn in a square that is not adjacent to the target, until the angel or one of its allies attacks the target, or until the angel drops below 1 hit point.	
Minor Actions	
Change Shape (polymorph) ✦ **At-Will**	
Effect: The angel alters its physical form to appear as a Medium humanoid until it uses this power again or until it drops to 0 hit points. To assume a specific individual's form, the angel must have seen that individual. Other creatures can make a DC 30 Insight check to discern that the form is a disguise.	
Chaste Kiss ✦ **Encounter**	
Effect: One ally adjacent to the angel gains 10 temporary hit points, and the angel ends one effect on the ally that a save can end.	
Skills Diplomacy +15	
Str 10 (+4) **Dex** 20 (+9) **Wis** 13 (+5)	
Con 10 (+4) **Int** 13 (+5) **Cha** 22 (+10)	
Alignment unaligned **Languages** Supernal	

The Elements of Desire

Succubi are sensual creatures that use their physicality to achieve their fiendish goals. With a soft touch or a gentle kiss, these seductresses can turn the hearts of kings and spell the doom of nations.

Diabolical Aspects

Even as the bright paradise Asmodeus had promised his legions burned before their eyes—transforming their prized utopia into nine cavernous Hells—the angels of love were stripped of their angelic virtues and branded with infernal shapes. Gone were the haloes of light that once had radiated warmth and comfort to the misbegotten. In their place grew a curved pair of horns. Where once each trailed a comet-like stream of cold angelic radiance, now a serpentine, spearheaded tail twisted behind. Their white wings darkened, and their soft feathers fell away, leaving a tough, leathery membrane like the wings of a bat. Such was the brand of the traitor—a warning to all angels signifying the price of betraying the gods they were made to serve.

In the world, succubi can transform to assume the appearance of mortal humanoids, but anyone canny enough to penetrate their disguises, or bold enough to gaze upon the bare flesh of a succubus in the Nine Hells, might witness her true diabolical aspects—the horns, tail, and bat-like wings of her infernal form.

Infernal Flesh

The succubus appears in any humanoid shape it pleases, usually an idyllic specimen or one that mirrors a specific individual whom its victim intensely desires. Despite her diabolical trappings, the succubus's true form is no less fair. As an immortal being, a succubus seldom displays wounds, scars, or physical imperfections. The seductive curves of the succubus's body draw to her the victim's eye, heart, body, mind—and in time, his very soul.

Those that behold the succubus's infernal flesh stare spellbound upon the devil's lascivious beauty. All but the strongest-willed stalwarts feel their oaths, promises, and resolve crumble away as the infernal heat of her form consumes them like a fever dream of forbidden delights; most obey the succubus's whims merely for the sake of receiving her diabolical favors.

Yet for all the tantalizing beauty of the succubus's physical form, it is simply the lure by which she entices her victims; the succubus's delicate touch is what guides a victim's soul to damnation. It ignites the blood with insatiable desire, torrid as the blazing heart of Nessus. After a single fleeting touch, even clerics, crusaders, and paladins have been known to forswear their vows—their souls now darkened with unholy lust.

Kiss without Bliss

When the succubi were angels of love, they had the power to banish negative emotions and evil desires with a single chaste kiss that overwhelmed body and soul with sublime fulfillment, and the feeling of ease that accompanies the attainment of one's heart's desire.

When these angels fell from grace, they yearned for the heavens they had lost and for the golden lands of paradise that Asmodeus had promised them. This unquenchable desire infuses every part of their beings, and all the gentle satisfaction they once offered has become a vacuum. Now, rather than satisfying desire, their kisses instill it, every kiss an echo of the bottomless abyss that is the succubus's longing for that which is forbidden to them. Physical acts of love are the nearest these devils can come to the state of bliss they once enjoyed as angels of love. They suffer under an acute physical addiction—a sustained,

insatiable desire for the touch of flesh that only a kiss will ameliorate.

The recipient of a succubus's kiss gains no satisfaction from it. Rather, he experiences the immortal emptiness that the succubus imparts, and, like the succubus, his yearning knows no bounds. He will give up his life for the devil rather than live without her touch. Such creatures are little more than slaves to the succubus's will, their every action born of desperate desire for the fulfillment they can never realize.

Shapeshifting Form

In the same way that angels embody celestial vocations such as valor, protection, and love, the succubus is a manifest incarnation of forbidden desire. In the same way that desire takes innumerable forms, so can the succubus change to appear as a humanoid of either gender.

As angels of love, succubi took on shapes pleasing to mortal eyes so they could bring comfort and consolation to their charges. A succubus likewise assumes an attractive appearance, but she uses her ability to tempt, seduce, and corrupt her victims. Not all succubi rely on their "natural" physical charms to win mortal souls; each one can mold her shape to suit the desires of those she most seeks to corrupt. An old man bound for the grave might trade anything to see his deceased wife again. Good souls who appreciate the beauty of another's mind, heart, or spirit might most desire an individual of unremarkable appearance. In her hunt for corruptible souls, a succubus caters to all desires, even taking the form of a gaunt waif, an obese crone, a diseased peasant, or a crippled youth if that is what her victim loves or desires. A succubus knows that a common or wretched shape can sometimes inspire more sympathy or trust in the mortal heart than an attractive form can.

SUCCUBUS DEVILS AND INCUBUS DEMONS

In the 4th Edition D&D® game, the gray line between demons and devils was more clearly defined: Demons are creatures corrupted by the Abyss that thrive on raw chaos and destruction. Devils are fallen servants of the gods that employ temptation, manipulation, and seduction in hopes of corrupting, and ultimately ruling, the universe rather than destroying it. Because of this redefinition, some monsters were re-categorized. The most prominent among these was the succubus, which no longer fit the mold as a demon—a role it had occupied since the earliest days of D&D lore.

In *Demonomicon*, the incubus—the male aspect of the succubus from folklore—made its 4th Edition debut as a demon. As the abyssal counterpoint to the infernal succubus, the incubus was cast as a male demon of violent, insatiable lust rather than a creature that relied on seduction. So how could an incubus be both the male aspect of a succubus devil *and* a demon in the Abyss?

Demonomicon explains that when the devil Graz'zt attacked the Abyss during the Blood War, he brought his harem of succubi. After Graz'zt had occupied three layers of the Abyss and founded the triple realm of Azzagrat, he and his followers were gradually corrupted by the Abyss and transformed at least partially into demons. This corruption had a singular effect on his succubi—it triggered their male aspect, and they learned to change their shapes into forms more appropriate for their new demonic nature: those of savage, chaotic, insatiable beasts. Since these demons maintain the male form at all times, the term "incubus" came to be associated with this abyssal monster.

Regardless of the differences between demons and devils, a succubus that takes a male form is still commonly referred to as an incubus as long as it is assuming the male gender.

Reproduction by Seduction

Succubi, like other former angels, cannot give birth. As angels, they were never born, but were spontaneously manifested by the cosmos at the beginning of time to serve the gods. Their rebellion against the gods has not left devils with the ability to bear children. Even so, the succubi soon discovered a sinister means to spawn their own fiendish broods and multiply the legions of the Hells.

When a succubus wants to reproduce, she seduces a male mortal. Sometimes she entices him in dreams and sometimes, when she can, she appears in the flesh. She feeds upon his desire, exhausts him as she steals away his essence. Then the succubus departs. She shifts her shape and gender, adopting a male form—sometimes the very shape of the male whose essence she has stolen. A succubus in male form is called an incubus, and in this form the succubus visits a female. In dreams or in the flesh, the succubus seduces her just as it did the male.

From this unholy union, a half-devil (or cambion) child is conceived, and born to the female. The fiendish offspring usually grow into adults of such wickedness as to make their diabolical "mothers" proud. Although typical succubi harbor an intense loathing for children, some steal the cambion offspring for which they have been surrogate mothers and raise them in the Nine Hells as warlocks, soldiers, and personal attendants.

The Path to Perdition

Despite their lingering desire to recapture the love they once radiated, and despite their broken dream of an astral paradise where they could love freely, the succubi wholeheartedly trust Asmodeus's vision. They believe their rebellion against the gods has given them a degree of wisdom they lacked as angels. Time and again, the mortals they were once obliged to comfort and console have proven themselves weak and corruptible, and one after another the succubi bring them into the fold. Most mortals give in to temptation easily, abandoning devout principles for quick pleasures. As the succubi see it, each mortal birth is another potential soul for the Nine Hells, and it is only a matter of time before the Hells are so full of souls that Asmodeus has but to pluck the heart of evil from the Abyss and smash the gates of the gods, reordering creation as he sees fit. The succubi know their place among the ranks of the devils, and their primary contributions to the great scheme lie in the temptation, corruption, and eventual capture of mortal souls.

Temptation

Just as mortals' prayers reach the ears of gods and angels in their domains in the Astral Sea, so do mortals' misdeeds attract the attentions of devils in the Nine Hells. When a mortal heart is tempted by lust or greed, that event opens the way for a succubus to visit, so that the devil might complete the creature's corruption. The succubus appears to its victim in his or her dreams, often assuming the shape of the individual most desirous to him or her—or the most forbidden.

With the conscious mind safely locked away in sleep, the mortal's unconscious desires run wild across the dreamscape; sacred oaths and solemn vows made in waking life seem unimportant in an unreal space devoid of material consequences. When an individual's unconscious mind is in this vulnerable state, the succubus takes advantage of the opening. There is no soul too lowly for a succubus to pursue, though the purer and stronger a victim's soul, the more glory it adds to the Nine Hells by its corruption.

Victims

To those that heed her call, the succubus promises pleasures beyond imagining. Her easiest victims are the lonely, the misbegotten, the desperate, and the hideous. A savior to the loathed of the world, she offers to fulfill their long-harbored desires. When the succubus calls to lusty youths, she offers a way to slake their adolescent appetites. She calls to married folk buried in the drab routine of domesticity, tantalizing them with a remembrance of long-forgotten passion. Most of all, the succubus enjoys carrying out the temptation of chaste clerics and other pure servants of the gods, offering them in their dreams a chance to be "normal" folk, not constrained from acting on the base greed and lust that is inherent to their primal nature.

A succubus's victim awakens exhausted, limbs sore and weary as if the individual had been awake all night actually living out the events of the dream. Immediately after waking, each one experiences a pang of loss, an emptiness that echoes with the fleeting notion of having experienced something wonderful, now swiftly fading and soon forgotten. Always victims yearn to return to the dream, to indulge themselves just one more time—to fill the gulf of emptiness in the hollow place where the succubus has claimed a small piece of their soul.

How the Curse Works

Succubus visitation uses the curse rules to simulate the way the succubus preys on sleeping mortals in order to corrupt them, gain access to their world, and ultimately steal away their souls.

This curse might be bestowed because of a failed saving throw after a night of dreams infiltrated by a succubus, or by a calculated caress, as represented in the following power that a DM can add to such a creature.

Succubus Visitation **Level 10 Curse**

Each night the victim awakens from the succubus's dream visitation exhausted and drained, as though it had indulged every forbidden desire of the swiftly fading dream.

Stage 0: The curse is dormant.

Stage 1: While affected by stage 1, the target takes a -2 penalty to initiative, and at the start of each encounter, the target is slowed until the end of its first turn.

Stage 2: While affected by stage 2, the target is affected by stage 1. In addition, once per day, a specific succubus can teleport to a square within 20 squares of the target.

Stage 3: While affected by stage 3, the target is affected by stages 1 and 2. In addition, the target loses a healing surge after each extended rest, which it does not recover until the curse has been lifted. If the target ends an extended rest with no healing surges left, it dies, and its soul is claimed by the succubus.

Check: At the end of each extended rest, the target makes an Endurance check or a Religion check.

12 or Lower: The stage of the curse increases by one.

13-17: No change.

18 or Higher: The stage of the curse decreases by one.

Lifting the Curse: Kill the succubus that imposed the curse on you, and perform seven good deeds for each stage of the curse that affected you.

Triggered Actions

Calculated Caress ✦ Encounter

Trigger: The curser hits a creature with a charm attack.
Effect (Free Action): At the end of the encounter, the attacked creature makes a saving throw with a –2 penalty. On a failed saving throw, the creature is subjected to the curse of succubus visitation.

Capturing the Soul

Night after night the succubus returns, repeatedly tempting her victim to give in to all of its darkest desires, each one a greater taboo than the last. As the succubus corrupts the victim's mind and saps the energy of its body, the victim becomes more susceptible to temptation in its everyday, waking life. After the victim's unconscious mind is thoroughly corrupted, the succubus soon gains entry into the world, where she can have a direct influence over the weary victim's actions. At this stage the succubus's work is nearly complete, for she can appear as any individual she wishes, tempting her victim by offering counsel while disguised as a trusted friend, or charming and dominating her victim like a puppet. When a succubus has corrupted a creature completely—some say by causing her victim to commit the three betrayals of thought, word, and deed—the victim's soul belongs to the succubus. In this way, mortals turn over their souls to succubi not by formal pledge or contract, but by indulging in their own natural impulses and participating in their own corruption until the succubus controls them as easily as she would a possession.

The Queens of the Succubi

Most succubi dwell in the infernal caverns of the Nine Hells, but some make their homes in a magnificent pseudo-paradise amid the chaos of the Abyss, where they risk being transformed into incubus demons or worse. Even though all succubi share similar beliefs, goals, and methods of corrupting mortals, their allegiances typically lie with one of two polarizing figures—the so-called queens of the succubi.

The first and greatest of the angels of love to be seduced by Asmodeus were called Lilith and Malcanthet. For time out of mind these angels had done the bidding of the gods, inciting passion between mortals and comforting the lovelorn. But in the presence of Asmodeus, each angel saw a higher path—one in which compassion and virtue might have the greatest influence over the world: the just ruler of all creation would require a consort, after all—a resplendent queen to enhance Asmodeus's power and grace. Lilith and Malcanthet each saw this role as her destiny.

Asmodeus had no intention of sharing his authority, but, rather than deny the fallen angels' request and risk their enmity, he capitalized on the opportunity the situation presented him. In separate conference with each one, he praised Lilith and Malcanthet for their love and loyalty, promising each that she would gain his favor if she could outdo the deeds of her rival for his affection. By playing them against each other, Asmodeus created two loyal servants, both of which accomplished exceptional feats in the course of their rivalry.

Lilith and the Nine Hells

Before her diabolic transformation, Lilith had been the eldest of the angels of love, the first of their kind spawned by the cosmos at the beginning of creation. She was made to be a companion to gods and mortals, but as the first angel of love, Lilith was yet imperfect in her angelic nature, and secretly she longed for equality with the ones she was made to serve. Asmodeus nurtured the seed of this desire and used it to sway Lilith and all the angels that followed her. Thus it was no coincidence that Lilith intimately understood the all-encompassing powers of temptation and forbidden desire. As a devil she used these weapons with finesse, swiftly manipulating her way through the ranks of devils to take up a place at the right hand of Moloch, lord of Malbolge, the Sixth Hell. When Moloch was dethroned and exiled for rebellion against Asmodeus, Lilith easily avoided a similar fate and slipped into the same position as consort to Baalzebul, lord of Maladomini, the Seventh Hell.

In the Nine Hells, the largest populations of succubi dwell in Dis, Stygia, and Malbolge. These succubi look to Lilith as their mother and queen, the one who delivered them from the bondage of the gods. Both Lilith's followers and her foes have dubbed her "Queen of the Night," a sobriquet she appreciates but does not completely embrace. She still burns with her ancient desire to achieve *true* equality with the one she serves. Dwelling only two hells from Asmodeus's realm in Nessus, Lilith yet means to see herself ascend to the role of queen in more than name.

Malcanthet and the Abyss

As Lilith wove her way through the twisted politics of the Nine Hells, Malcanthet took another path to power. When Asmodeus made good on his promise to conquer the Abyss, Malcanthet was among the first to volunteer in the conflict that would become the Blood War. She saw the unrest as her chance to please the archdevil, expand her influence, and remove Lilith from Asmodeus's esteem.

Malcanthet led her devils into the Abyss and quickly conquered the layer called Shendilavri. She called upon the morphic nature of the Abyss and

fashioned her realm into a stunning paradise the like of which Asmodeus and all his legions had sought in their rebellion against the gods. There she declared herself the true Queen of Succubi—a title that yet endures, much to Lilith's chagrin.

The longer Malcanthet remained in the Abyss, the more the evil seed at its heart corrupted her, transforming her at last into a genuine demon lord. Though Malcanthet and her realm of Shendilavri are fair and lovely to behold, such beauty is only skin deep, and demonic corruption thrives beneath the surface. From her vantage point so close to the seed of evil, Malcanthet understands what Asmodeus truly desires at the center of the Abyss. Like her abyssal rival Graz'zt, Malcanthet still pays homage to Asmodeus, though secretly she means to have the heart of the Abyss for herself.

Malcanthet forges alliances with demon lords such as Demogorgon and Pazuzu to further her ends, and unlike other devils that cannot bear young, the fecund nature of the Abyss has enabled Malcanthet to spawn her own brood of twisted abominations with these demon lords.

Of all the demon lords, Malcanthet hates Graz'zt the most. A former devil like herself, Graz'zt is Malcanthet's principal competitor for Asmodeus's esteem in the Abyss. She despises him for a multitude of slights, including Graz'zt's claim over a harem of her succubi and his success in conquering not one abyssal layer, but the three that comprise his triple realm of Azzagrat.

Abyssal succubi revere Malcanthet as their true queen, and they inhabit her twisted paradise of Shendilavri on the 570th layer of the Abyss. Some of those that become corrupted into incubus demons turn to Graz'zt, though most remain in Shendilavri with their queen.

Evolution of the Lilitus

The elite among Lilith's succubi are known as the lilitus. When the angels of love were imprisoned within the Hells, their physical forms were branded with the infernal features of devils, and they earned the name "succubi." Lilitus are succubi that, because of their exceptional malice and corruption, have surpassed even this physical transformation. Though they retain the ability to change shape at will, these devils embody such malevolence that their bodies warp beyond the normal range of their kind. In their native forms, some lilitus have the heads of lions, owls, or eagles, and some have talons or cloven hooves. All lilitus are part serpent, with long, sinuous snakes sprouting from their bodies beneath their tattered wings. Instead of blood or immortal essence, only deadly poison fills the body of a lilitu.

The lilitus were evolved from succubi that corrupted or slew so many pure souls that Lilith honored them by invoking a physical change to mark them as chief among her agents. Some say Lilith caused the first such transformation with the ritual burning of a holy place, and her servants emerged whole from the flame and ash as the original lilitus.

Despite their origins, the Queen of the Night no longer maintains an exclusive hold on the elite servants that bear a version of her name. Several lilitus now serve Lilith's rival, Malcanthet, in the Abyss, and some of these the Abyss has corrupted even farther, transforming them into serpentine marilith demons subservient to the abyssal Queen of Succubi.

Lilitu **Level 10 Elite Controller**
Medium immortal humanoid (devil, shapechanger) XP 1,000

HP 212; **Bloodied** 106 **Initiative** +8
AC 24, **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 24 **Perception** +9
Speed 6, fly 6 Darkvision
Resist 10 fire
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1

Traits

☼ **Aura of Desire** (charm) ✦ **Aura** 2
A creature in the aura cannot attack the lilitu if another enemy is within 10 squares of that creature.

Standard Actions

⨭ **Claw** ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +15 vs. AC
Hit: 3d8 + 5 damage.

⨭ **Poison Stingers** (poison) ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⁞⁞
Attack: Close burst 1 (enemies in the burst); +13 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d8 + 5 damage, and ongoing 10 poison damage (save ends).
First Failed Saving Throw: The target is also slowed (save ends both).

Minor Actions

Change Shape (polymorph) ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: The lilitu alters its physical form to appear as a Medium humanoid until it uses this power again or until it drops to 0 hit points. To assume a specific individual's form, the lilitu must have seen that individual. Other creatures can make a DC 31 Insight check to discern that the form is a disguise.

⨭ **Hellfire Kiss** (charm, fire) ✦ **At-Will** (1/round)
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. Will
Hit: 2d8 + 5 fire damage, and the target makes a basic attack against a target of the lilitu's choice as a free action.

Skills Bluff +15, Insight +14, Intimidate +15

Str 16 (+8)	**Dex** 17 (+8)	**Wis** 19 (+9)
Con 18 (+9)	**Int** 16 (+8)	**Cha** 21 (+10)

Alignment evil **Languages** Supernal

Succubus Companions

If the succubi achieved one significant success in their rebellion against the gods, it was their attainment of free will. Though succubi often serve entities of greater power, they are not necessarily bound to such creatures and may act as they please. Most choose to throw their lot in with villains that further the succubus's aims, but some succubi decide to join forces with heroes, for intentions good or ill.

Sometimes a succubus becomes the companion of a mortal hero to gradually tempt that person, gently steering the hero toward a path that aligns with her goals or those of her true masters. Ultimately, the succubus wants to corrupt and claim that mortal's soul, though she is seldom in a hurry to do so; as immortals, succubi possess a patience to exceed most mortal life spans. Time is something they do not lack, so while they may serve mortal masters faithfully for many years, their ulterior motives may be more selfish and sinister in nature. Heroes are made of sterner stuff than ordinary mortals, and their souls are of exceptional value to the vile creatures that harvest them.

On the other hand, a succubus might follow a hero for support and assistance as she tries to walk the path toward redemption. An especially influential hero might even persuade a succubus to turn from evil and seek such a path.

An Angelic Ally

The stat block here provides a succubus companion character for your game based on the rules for companion characters (*Dungeon Master's Guide*® 2). In combat, a succubus companion can be a potent secondary controller; in roleplaying encounters, a significant spy or negotiator. If your succubus companion walks the path of redemption, consider swapping its *dominate* power for the *chaste kiss* power in the angel of love stat block. Like other companion characters, a succubus companion will ultimately come and go as needed, supporting the party as necessary but fading into the background in instances when the heroes must stand alone.

Succubus Companion **Level 9 Controller**
Medium immortal humanoid (devil, shapechanger) XP –

HP 52; **Bloodied** 26; **Healing Surges** 6 **Initiative** +8
AC 22, **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 24 **Perception** +8
Speed 6, fly 6 Darkvision
Resist 10 fire

Standard Actions

⊕ **Corrupting Touch** ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. AC
Hit: 1d10 + 10 damage.

† **Companion's Charming Kiss** (charm) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. Will
Hit: The target cannot attack the succubus or a creature within 5 squares of the succubus that she designates. The effect lasts until the succubus or one of its allies attacks the target, until the succubus drops below 1 hit point, until the succubus uses this power again, or until the end of the encounter.

↷ **Dominate** (charm) ✦ **Encounter**
Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +13 vs. Will
Hit: The target is dominated (save ends).

Minor Actions

Change Shape (polymorph) ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: The succubus alters its physical form to appear as a Medium humanoid until it uses this power again or until it drops to 0 hit points. To assume a specific individual's form, the succubus must have seen that individual. Other creatures can make a DC 30 Insight check to discern that the form is a disguise.

Skills Bluff +15, Insight +13

Str 11 (+4)	**Dex** 18 (+8)	**Wis** 19 (+8)
Con 10 (+4)	**Int** 15 (+6)	**Cha** 22 (+10)

Alignment varies **Languages** Supernal

Redeemed Succubi

Even though all succubi long for the paradise that Asmodeus promised them, they would sooner remain masters of their own way than return to bondage under the gods. A rare few succubi, however, truly regret their betrayal and supplicate themselves before the gods in hopes of redemption.

The path to redemption is difficult for succubi to tread, and it leads to a destination that precious few can reach. First the succubus must discover a way to leave the Nine Hells. Then she must walk the path of atonement. An atoning succubus must live a chaste and virtuous life, countering every deed she committed against the gods with seven good deeds. Since devils were created near the beginning of time, a succubus's atonement might require centuries to complete.

Once a succubus answers seven times for each betrayal, she is redeemed before the gods. In all but the rarest of circumstances in which a succubus is restored as an angel, her form does not change. She is released from her sentence in the Nine Hells, and sometimes she is allowed to return to the astral dominions that the succubi long ago departed.

The succubus philosopher Fall-From-Grace is an example of a redeemed succubus; she serves as the proprietor of the Brothel of Slaking Intellectual Lusts in the city of Sigil.

Thwarting the Succubus

A succubus is unflagging in her corruption of mortal souls, but with the proper knowledge and actions, righteous heroes might foil her infernal goals.

Ritual Banishment

The most common method of dealing with a succubus is to invoke rituals to ward her away. Both the Magic Circle ritual and the Adjure ritual work toward this purpose.

A circle of gold and salt sprinkled around a slumbering victim during the performance of a Magic Circle ritual prevents a succubus from entering his or her dreams for the span of an extended rest. At the end of this rest, the victim can roll twice on its Endurance check or its Religion check to resist the curse of succubus visitation, and choose either result.

A successful Adjure ritual used in conjunction with a magic circle of salt and gold, however, might banish a succubus outright for a year and a day.

Atonement

Succubi are usually summoned into the world by thoughts of lust or greed, especially those that arise from the subconscious mind. A creature that suspects itself the victim of a succubus's attacks might drive the succubus away by selflessly performing charitable or wholesome deeds. Each significant act of mercy, charity, or love committed before an extended rest weakens the succubus's hold upon the creature's soul, providing a cumulative +1 bonus to the creature's next Endurance check or Religion check against the curse of succubus visitation.

Confrontation

A creature plagued by a succubus can also face the devil directly by confronting its physical form in the world or fighting off its dream visitations. The Dream Concordance ritual presented here enables a group of allies to combine their strength so they can combat the seductive haunter of dreams.

Dream Concordance

Level: 11
Category: Travel
Time: 5 minutes
Duration: One short rest or extended rest
Component Cost: 600 gp
Market Price: 2,900 gp
Key Skill: Arcana or Religion (no check)

When you take a short rest or an extended rest, you perform this ritual on yourself and up to six unconscious subjects. The subjects' conscious minds are transported to a subdimension within the Plane of Dreams, where their bodies manifest as if they were conscious. The ritual can be used for three primary purposes: private conference, information retrieval, or battling a mind-affecting predator. Some use this ritual to combat madness.

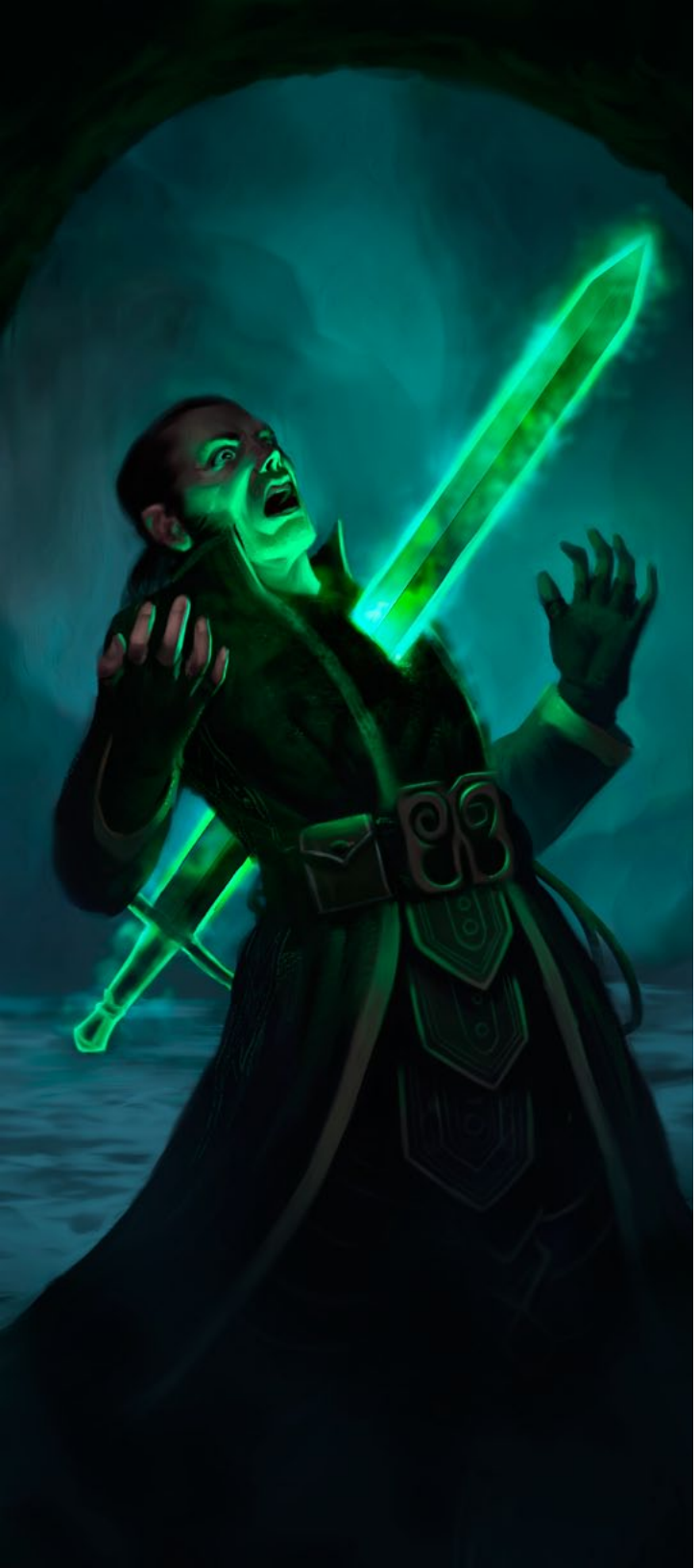
The subdimension created by the ritual is a virtual world built from the dreams of one or more of the ritual's subjects. At the start of the ritual, each participant names a specific creature or location. These elements typically populate the dreamscape, though the precise nature of the subdimension as an adventure environment is at the DM's discretion. In the dreamscape, the participants' actions and conversations cannot be observed with scrying rituals. Here the participants can search for knowledge locked in a subject's mind, perhaps a forgotten memory or a closely guarded secret. Creatures that lurk in dreams, such as succubi, might be discovered in the dreamscape, and slaying such a creature there banishes it from the mind of its victim. The means by which information is discovered and creatures are encountered is up to the DM.

Living creatures at 0 hit points or fewer when the ritual is performed manifest in the dreamscape with 1 hit point; all other living creatures maintain their current game statistics. Powers, abilities, and healing surges spent in the dream are expended in reality as well, except for powers granted by consumables or magic items. Damage taken in the dreamscape is converted to psychic damage and then applied to the sleeping subject, and hit points regained in the dreamscape are likewise regained in reality. Any creature reduced to 0 hit points or fewer while in the dreamscape is instantly ejected from it, but remains unconscious and stable with 0 hit points.

When the ritual ends, all subjects awaken, but they do not gain the benefits of a rest.

About the Author

Steve Townshend is a freelance D&D designer whose recent credits include *Monster Vault: Threats to the Nentir Vale*, *Madness at Gardmore Abbey*™, and *Player's Option: Heroes of the Feywild*™. The banderhobbs and Oublivae, the Demon Queen of Desolation, are two of his favorite creations for D&D.



FORGOTTEN REALMS®

ED GREENWOOD'S
Eye on the Realms

The Sword of Spells

By Ed Greenwood

Illustration by Sam Carr

An eerie flying sword is racing about the Realms, point first, attacking wizards without warning.[1]

If these wizards defeat the sword, it flees. Those transfixed by the sword instantly collapse unconscious, and when they awaken, they discover that a new spell has appeared in their minds—a bit of arcane magic they now know forever.[2] These new spells are rare and unfamiliar to those who gain them, which has mages, sages, and local rulers asking: Where did this sword come from? Who sent it? From where do its spells originate, and why does the blade confer them?

So Strange a Blade

The sword might have first appeared in the late summer of 1449 DR, when the wizard Halendor of Zazesspur was wounded by it while encamped on an overland journey through eastern Tethyr. His three apprentices, traveling with him, were terrified when he "fell as if dead," and they thought they'd be the sword's next victims. But the blade flew away, leaving them unscathed, and it headed west "like a speeding arrow."

A tenday later, two mages were found stabbed to death, one in Velen and one in Mosstone, which caused much consternation and created fears that unidentified murderers had used hitherto-unknown portals to get in and out of the locked and shielded "spellcasting cellars"[3] in which the dead wizards were found. Though locals still seek mysterious killers, wizards and sages now find it increasingly likely that the unfortunate Annaethe Rivvalar of Crimmor and Zobrant Alnrith of Ormpur were victims of the flying sword.

In both cellars, slot-sized air vents offered clear passage for something of the sword's size, but not a direct line of fire to where the bodies lay. Both of the dead mages had been hired by wealthy merchant families[4] to enspell the homes, warehouses, and "persons" (bodies) of their patrons to render the merchants safer against brigands, thieves, and opportunists. The hirings were done quietly and the work kept secret, and neither wizard had any known enemies.

The sword may have visited other spellcasters before and after Rivvalar and Alnrith, but it definitely wounded the mage Anammathur Mraedult of Baldur's Gate one evening that Marpenoth when he was

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feasting with the wealthy retired adventurer Baereth Onslur and the shipping fleet owner Irenaera Sohmaersheld. Onslur, a veteran warrior, got a good look at the blade as he tried to strike it down out of the air (it seemingly ignored or was unaware of him and his attacks), and he described it as being a "nondescript, normal-looking longsword of plain metal with an everyday, well-worn leather grip of dark brown hue, like thousands upon thousands of others."

Interested wizards and sages have assembled more particulars about the flying sword from other reports. As the weapon strikes home, its pommel and blade emit a silent flare of bright blue light, but it is otherwise ordinary in appearance except for its silent, point-first flight. The blade swoops and darts and is seemingly aware of walls, furniture, and other obstacles, avoiding them rather than plowing into them. Reports suggest that if a shield or other mobile barrier—even an unintended target, such as a person who is not an arcane spellcaster—is moved to block the sword's flight, it swiftly turns aside and can back up in midair to escape a closet, wardrobe, or other confined space or intended cage.

No one has discerned any clear pattern or commonality among the blade's victims, other than their mastery of arcane magic and the fact that very few warlocks have been targeted. (The sword has slain or broken the pacts of the handful it has "visited.")[5]

This lack of information has not stopped people from speculating. As the sword stabbed its way across Faerûn over the next four years, appearing less and less frequently but wounding many prominent mages, theories about it came thick and fast from sages, mages, and priests everywhere.

"The work of Asmodeus," one called it. "Szass Tam's winnowing of wizards," another asserted. (Both of these notions, and many others, held that the sword slew weaklings and "infected" those who survived its strikes with undetectable, unidentified magic that would be awakened at some future time, allowing the blade's sender to gain power over them.)[6] Other stories about the sword claimed that it was the work of this or that priesthood or sinister cabal of wizards (or one of the various well-known mage groups, such as the Cowled Wizards of Amn), settling scores or eliminating potential foes.

But no one could prove anything. The attacks continued, often in a bewildering manner (wounding one wizard and ignoring another in the same location, then dashing past other mages to seek out someone specific), and the speculations flourished and gave way to others, only to be resurrected and modified again and again. Frightened wizards gossiped as often as fascinated observers, with chatter about victims that the sword has downed lately catching fire in many an inn and tavern. The doings of "so strange a blade" (as Barrok Erlurender, a well-known wandering warpriest of Tempus put it) provided a constant flow of colorful news and gossip, as well as speculation about the new spells gained by those who survive the sword's thrusts.[7]

Terror of the Realms

So things proceeded until the spring of 1454 DR, when the sword seemed to vanish as suddenly and mysteriously as it had come. Mages began to relax, and theories about the flying blade suggested that perhaps it had completed its task (whatever that was). Then the sword returned in the month of Eleint, stabbing three mages in the same day, all in the city of Ormpur.

It then swept on to Calimshan and killed over sixty genasi in the next few days, apparently leaving no survivors. Then it struck in Westgate, Selgaunt, and Mulmaster over the next tenday before vanishing again. The sword returned the following spring, when it struck thrice in a day and then slowed to one (or, at least, one *public*) attack per month. Aside from a few flurries of multiple attacks in a small area over a handful of days, the flying sword has maintained a monthly frequency ever since.

Its survivors include such well-known wizards as Dorn Veltammlar of Athkatla and Ursk Yarundrel of Elturel, as well as unknown novices such as Helmaer Ilgund of Arabel and Roskyn Indryth of Mistledale. Publicly, the blade's origins, purpose, and "for-the-future infections" (Erlurender's words, again) remain a mystery.

Elminster has been interested in the sword for some years. In particular, he was intrigued by its (thus far) forbearance from striking at any Chosen of Mystra. So he began to hunt the sword, recruiting interested priests to help him.

In the end, he encaged it with spells in the wilderness east of the High Forest, ensnaring it in decaying wards that were modified for the purpose. The sword struck and slew the wizard Ganather of Secomber, who volunteered to be a lure for the trap, and Elminster was angry enough over Ganather's death to sacrifice several magic items to empower the magical cage, vowing to uncover "all the truth that could be won from the sword itself." He has now done so and has concluded that the flying blade was enchanted and sent into the Realms by the deity Savras.

A Sending of Savras

As far as Elminster can tell (and he readily admits there is much about the sword he doesn't know), the flying blade was enchanted by Savras long ago, before the god lost his battles against the ascending Azuth. It was intended as a means of sending rewards to worshipers who pleased the All-Seeing, but as Savras battled Azuth and grew increasingly desperate, he sent the sword against his foe. Azuth turned it aside with a volley of magic that stripped the weapon of an enchantment that mitigated the damage of its thrusts,[8] and he sent it hurtling far from the fray. When the will of Savras brought the sword racing back, Azuth caught and "froze" it in a stasis forcecage.

Azuth then proceeded to defeat and bind Savras, quite forgetting about the sword. The weapon remained trapped in the cage, immobile, until that magic failed (probably in 1449 DR, some time after great harm befell Azuth in 1385 DR).

What still puzzles Elminster is how much sentience the *Sword of Savras* (the formal name given to the weapon by some sages) now possesses. And if the blade has none, then who is guiding it? Obviously, Savras enchanted it to fly about, attack wizards, and bestow spells in their minds, but with that deity gone (as far as Elminster can tell, though he cautions that mortals can never be certain about matters divine), who is guiding the sword to choose particular targets? It could be following a set of instructions enspelled into it by the All-Seeing, but if that's the case, learning those instructions is important, and Elminster was unable to do so before the flying blade tore free of the cage in which he had trapped it.

So once more the sword flies free about the Realms, stabbing sorcerers and wizards—one a month, it seems. Elminster discerned that the blade has a mighty spell reflection effect designed to turn most magical attacks on the sword back onto their sources. Underlying that effect is a complex, many-layered enchantment that seems to enshrine conditions that cause the sword to undertake different tasks, but Elminster hasn't yet gained even a hint as to the nature of those conditions or the tasks to which they're linked.

The Gifts of the Blade

Elminster has always been loathe to compel fellow mages into doing things (*manipulate* yes, *coerce* no), and almost all wizards are secretive about their precise magical capabilities. As Elminster puts it, "Ye wouldn't expect a warrior to detail the chinks, worn parts, and other weaknesses in his battle armor. Well, wizards are no different." Thus, learning about the spells imparted by the *Sword of Savras* is slow, difficult work. El hasn't laid bare much as of yet, and out of professional courtesy, he has declined to identify which survivors of the blade's attacks have been gifted with which particular magic.

He has, however, provided descriptions of some of the spell effects of Art granted by the flying sword.

- It confers the ability to make a *fireball*, *wall of fire*, or any other conflagration that is caused or boosted by magic instantly jump to a new location up to 120 feet away. This power works on established magical fires and on those that haven't yet taken effect, so it can "intercept" a fireball that is being cast, has just been cast, or is about to be cast. Flames left over in the former area of effect are extinguished.
- It grants the caster the ability to create a floating, flying illusory face through which she can see, speak, and unleash spells. The face moves at her mental bidding and can persist some distance from the caster in accordance with her magical strength. The detailed, lifelike face glows, so it can't be hidden easily, and those who observe it can recognize it as belonging to the caster. While the face exists, it is the origin of all spells from the caster, so most defensive wards or shields protect the face and not the caster. Attacks on the face don't harm the caster. In fact, physical attacks don't affect the face at all, but successful magical attacks destroy it instantly. The wizard who gained this spell from the sword uses it to look—and unleash spells—around corners and into monster lairs without directly exposing herself to harm.
- The caster gains an augmented *dimension door* spell that lets her make three short teleportation jumps within ten minutes. A variant of this ability allows the caster to instead send a small, non-magic item on three jumps within ten minutes. When transporting an object in this manner, the caster must know and visualize each precise destination ("Send my bloody glove to the table in the guardroom, then to the tiles in front of the throne, and finally to my husband's bedside table. That should warn them all.") The spell can't transport an object that contains essentially different items, so it could send a leather bag with leather gloves and leather scraps inside, but it couldn't send an ivory coffer full of rubies. It can send messages only if they are written on a transportable item, so it could send a note that has been scrawled on a glove, but it couldn't send a piece of parchment that has been pinned to a glove.
- The caster has an unseen spell damper that turns half the damage dealt him by hostile spells into a spectacular but harmless eruption of thunderous sound and bright light. The damper does not function automatically; the caster must call on its power. When he does so, the damper kicks in and lasts for a mere handful of seconds, protecting him against any spells that attack him or his area during that time.

Other effects imparted by the *Sword of Savras*, Elminster says, are too vague or confusing to report yet.

Notes

1. The sword targets wizards and sorcerers. If they avoid two of its attempted attacks or deal it enough damage, it ceases attacking them and flies on. If the sword successfully hits a target, its strike harms the victim and causes instant unconsciousness. A small portion of the damage remains with the victim permanently.

2. This newfound spell is in addition to those already known by the victim. It does not count against his or her usual roster of spells and does not require rest or study. The granted spell reappears in the caster's mind, ready to be used again, 24 hours after the last time he or she cast it.

3. For those wealthy enough to afford shielded, reinforced spellcasting chambers (either in separate outlying buildings of an estate or in "spellhurling cellars" beneath a fortress, which are often converted natural caverns), use of such venues has increased since the Spellplague struck. These chambers protect magic-wielders and keep their activities secret from fearful commoners and neighbors.

4. The Alkaethers of Velen and the Oromanches of Mosstone. Both families are recently risen traders with many casual rivals but no sworn foes or ongoing feuds. (Patriarch Symund Alkaether and his kin are more studious, less handsome, and more private than the dashing, flamboyant Oromanches, who spend lavishly and share "dark, lush good looks, strong daring, and a love of many and fleeting romances," in the words of Elminster, who is good friends with Maerele Oromanche, matriarch of the family. El maintains cooler relationships with her three much younger brothers: Elklund, Imraphar, and Odyle.)

5. The survivors have had their pacts severed and thus lost their ability to wield arcane magic, though they seem to have retained mastery of any magic items they had acquired. Victims include the notorious "dark spells for hire" Ertrym Rostrarl of Zazesspur; the formidable and mysterious figure known only as "The Morokh" of Almraiven, who consorts with flying snakes, wears a small arsenal of battle-blasting magic items, and is rumored never to sleep; and Eaerith Talor of Athkatla, the graceful, beautiful man who goes by the name of "Luthlund of Luskan" and often pretends to be female to gain access to the revels of the noble and wealthy, where he finds clients and sponsors for his adventures.

6. So widespread did this idea become that within a year of the sword's first sightings, the phrase "sender of the sword!" became an oath used in learned or sophisticated society throughout Faerûn, often by those who had heard only distorted tales (or nothing at all) about the blade and knew no details of the Art beyond what they gleaned from tavern tales.

7. Very few survivors of the sword have shown any willingness to discuss the spells imparted by the blade. If pressed by family members, guild colleagues, or patrons who have any hold or authority over them, the survivors either privately demonstrate their newfound magic or dismiss their gift as a trifle, such as "a minor casting concerned with making me able to smell better" or "an augmentation of a magic I already knew." (Elminster says these latter sorts of claims are lies; the strikes of the sword always endow Art unfamiliar to those struck.)

8. Before this incident, the sword dealt pain and shock when it attacked, and when it withdrew, it immediately healed the damage it had caused. Now, the sword deals the standard damage that a nonmagic longsword would cause if thrust into a foe with a warrior's shrewd guiding strength (and intent to kill).

About the Author

Ed Greenwood is the man who unleashed the Forgotten Realms® setting on an unsuspecting world. He works in libraries, plus he writes fantasy, science fiction, horror, mystery, and romance stories (sometimes all in the same novel), but he is happiest when churning out Realmslore, Realmslore, and more Realmslore. He still has a few rooms in his house in which he has space left to pile up papers.

EBERRON

Eye on Eberron

Miron's Tears

By Keith Baker

Illustration by Peter Tikos

There was a time when the templars of the Silver Flame had the trust and respect of all citizens of Galifar, regardless of home or faith. Today, outsiders speak more of the corruption in our ranks than of the sanctity of our mission. Tira weeps, but our course is clear: We must be the cleansing flame that burns away this infection.

—Prefect Samyr Kes

In Sharn, a priest allows the Boromar Clan to use his church for illicit activities in exchange for a cut of the profits. In Thaliost, Archbishop Dariznu burns a man alive for the crime of defending his home. In Flamekeep, a cultist stares into a candle and listens to the whispers of the flame urging him to do evil.

The noble aspirations of the Church of the Silver Flame have always been marred by human weakness, but problems such as these have grown dramatically over the past century. Distant churches have strayed from the path espoused by the Keeper of the Flame. But Jaela is about to get a hand from an unexpected place: a secret order of spies and assassins that have been hiding in the shadows since the church was founded.

The inquisition is about to begin. Enjoy the ride.

Sacred Assassins

On the night before Tira Miron's final battle with the archfiend Bel Shalor, she gathered her closest allies to outline her vision for the Church of the Silver Flame. Most of her words were preserved and form the foundation of the Flamic creed. But one conversation was kept from the general record. The avenger Samyr Kes wanted to fight at Tira's side when she faced the Lord of Shadows, but she ordered him to stay back.

"I can bind our enemy," she told Kes, "but no prison can hold him forever or completely. There will be those who hear his whispers, those who do his bidding. Gather your eyes and your blades. Watch for these people. Save them if you can—but if there is no other way, you must put the safety of the innocent before all else." She wept as she spoke, and Samyr swore to do as she asked.

All know how Tira sacrificed herself to bind Bel Shalor. Her comrades did as she asked, founding the church to continue her fight against darkness. Only a few knew about the orders she had given Samyr Kes, but Tira had been clear that they were to cooperate with him in all things and give his order anything it required. Today the order is a ghost

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within the church, even more secretive than the Argentum. Its members are drawn from those exorcists and templars who display exceptional devotion and resistance to demonic influence. For centuries, the group that calls itself Miron's Tears has fought a secret war against fiendish forces that have sought to infiltrate or corrupt the church. The order has wiped out sects of the Whispering Flame and Cults of the Dragon Below. It has exposed members of the Lords of Dust and their schemes. And for the most part, its members have fought and died without ever being recognized for their achievements. The order operates with the utmost secrecy, and at this time both Krozen and Jaela are unaware of its existence.

Thanks to Tira's edict, the order had unlimited resources when it was first establishing its operations. It has safe houses and supply caches hidden in most cities where the church has an extensive presence. Samyr Kes maintains a small force of spies and assassins who serve the order full time. Most members of the order serve the church in other ways and conceal their allegiance to the Tears. These specialists relay information and can be activated when necessary. As such, it has never been necessary for the order to have a large number of members . . . until now.

The Cleansing Flame

The last century has been a terrible time for the Church of the Silver Flame. By assuming control of Thrane, the church created opportunities in its ranks for those whose political ambitions outweighed their dedication to the principles of the faith, while simultaneously making it difficult for the Keeper to guide the faithful in those nations that were at war with Thrane. The priests of Aundair have always had a tendency toward zealotry, and over the course of the century that tendency has grown and produced monsters like Dariznu. The Brelish tend to be pragmatic, and many a priest sees no conflict in lining his pockets while he defends the innocent from evil. Now that the war is over, Keeper Jaela is doing her best to strengthen these wounded connections, following the Flamic principles of redemption.

Samyr Kes has decided to take things farther. After long consideration, he has come to the conclusion that Miron's Tears was founded to prevent corruption from taking root in the church. Once, the greatest threat to the church's purity was infernal influence. Today, the ranks of corrupted priests include both those who traffic with fiends and those who put their personal wealth ahead of the salvation of the innocent. Kes is determined to redeem the church, even if he must shed the blood of priests and paladins to do it.

Kes has quite a few problems to be addressed on the way to reaching that goal. Here are just a few that are on his list.

Dariznu and the Pure Flame: The Pure Flame movement is prone to zealotry and violence. Archbishop Solhar Dariznu and other extremists support torture and execution as ways to guide the masses toward the light. Samyr Kes could easily send assassins to kill Dariznu, but his death could throw Thaliost into deeper chaos, and it might make him into a martyr that would galvanize the Pure Flame into even worse violence. Kes wants to find a way to discredit the fundamental beliefs of the Pure Flame—to dispose of Dariznu and his fellow murderers, but to do so in a way that will draw the archbishop's followers back to the Keeper instead of exacerbating their extremism.

The Theocracy: Samyr Kes despises the theocratic government of Thrane. Tira Miron never intended for the church to be a governmental body, and Kes is horrified by the people who come to the church only for the sake of acquiring political power. He has wanted to bring down High Cardinal Krozen for a long time, but he is looking for a way to kill the cardinal that wouldn't simply create an opening for someone even less desirable. He wants to see the monarchy of Thrane restored and the church brought back to its role as the guardian of all nations, but he knows that a single assassination won't achieve that goal.

Greed: Breland in particular has a plague of priests who are more interested in lining their pockets than in meeting the needs of their flock. Samyr believes that it's time to start making examples of these people, clearing the path for a new generation of priests who better appreciate the mission of the church.

Supernatural Threats: Though Samyr Kes is determined to clean out the mundane corruption that has spread within the church, he's still vitally concerned about external threats. If he discovers evidence of vampires, Whispering Flame cultists, demons, or other forms of supernatural corruption, he is likely to move that problem to the top of his list.

Behind the Tears

Miron's Tears is a small order, and its members are expected to be resourceful and independent. Most of the Tears know only one or two other agents, so they are incapable of exposing too many secrets of the order. All of them answer to two masters, the Golden Serpent and Samyr Kes.

The Golden Serpent is the celestial patron of the order. He is one of the last true couatls in existence; like Samyr, he was left as a guardian when his companions sacrificed themselves. Although he hasn't manifested physically in the world for over two hundred years, he provides guidance and advice, and facilitates communication between Samyr Kes and agents in the field. He also monitors the Tears to ensure that active agents aren't under the influence of demonic possession. It is the Golden Serpent who has pushed Samyr Kes down his current path;

the Serpent is disgusted by the corruption spreading through the church, and wants to see it destroyed.

Prefect Samyr Kes is one of the founders of the Church of the Silver Flame. Born in 221 YK, he is ancient even for an elf; his life force has been bolstered by both the Golden Serpent and his close connection to the Flame. His mind is sharp, but his flesh is beginning to fail him, and he must rely on his agents to do what must be done. His divine gifts allow him to cloud the minds of others, and so he remains in Flamekeep to this day, operating out of a secret level deep below the modern cathedral. Although he has been long forgotten by the modern leaders, his hidden library contains proof of all that he has done, along with Tira's original orders under her seal. He doesn't want to reveal his presence to the Council of Cardinals, but if he must, he has the proof he needs to reassert his authority.

Samyr Kes loved Tira Miron, and he has spent centuries carrying out her last request. This duty is all that keeps him alive, and if he ever came to believe he had failed—say, if Tira herself told him that he had gone too far—it's possible he would die on the spot.

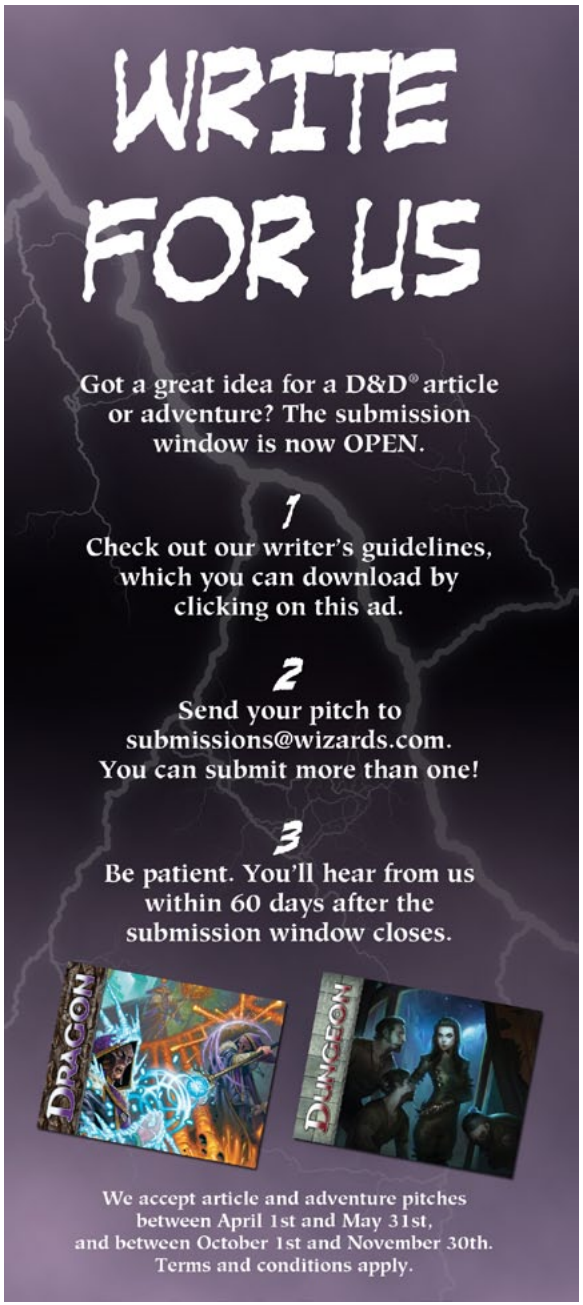
Adventure Ideas

Miron's Tears can serve "simply" as allies of the characters against the Lords of Dust or other forms of corruption in the Church of the Silver Flame. But the group's actions could become more extreme and have a more drastic effect on the world at large. The corrupt Archierophant Ythana Morr of Sharn, Dariznu of Thaliost, even Krozen himself—any of these priests could be targeted for assassination. Presumably, Samyr Kes has plans for dealing with the repercussions of these actions, such as the chaos that would be unleashed in Thaliost if Dariznu is killed . . . but if it suits the campaign, Kes could be caught by surprise. Miron's Tears can serve as a way to shake up the established order of the church. If the characters are interested in returning the Thranish monarchy to power or in freeing Thaliost, Miron's Tears could play a major role in either of those efforts.

- A character who follows the Silver Flame is approached by the order and asked to join. The process would involve dangerous tests of courage, will, and loyalty, but it would come with the promise of redeeming the wounded church. Will the character embrace the new, larger mission of the order, or try to pull Samyr Kes back from his aggressive course of action?
- When Miron's Tears tries to assassinate a corrupt priest, the characters are caught in the middle of the plot. They know nothing of the target's misdeeds. Can they sort things out correctly, or will they take the wrong side?
- At the present time, the order is continuing to operate in secret and targeting only a handful of people. It could choose to step out of the shadows and into the light. With the authority of Tira's own seal and general frustration over the corruption in the church, Miron's Tears could spearhead a full-scale inquisition, gripping the entire church with crusader zeal. And once the church itself is purified by force, that's only a step away from trying to force a new vision of morality on the rest of Khorvaire.
- After working with the order for a time, a character finds evidence that Samyr Kes has been driven mad by his love for Tira. Kes now seeks to release Bel Shalor—because doing so could free Tira as well. Is this evidence strong enough to convince the rest of the Tears, or must the characters deal with the mad prefect by themselves?

About the Author

Keith Baker is the creator of the Eberron® campaign setting and designer of the card game *Gloom*. You can find him on Twitter as @HellcowKeith.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DARK·SUN CAMPAIGN SETTING

Eye on Dark Sun

Ysrilla Lightstep

By Rodney Thompson

Illustration by Peter Tikos

On Athas, the world is against you, other people are against you, and, in some cases, fate is against you—and the rare individual who can persevere against those odds is not to be trifled with. To be able to overcome all those obstacles without the aid of magic, psionics, or other supernatural abilities is even more remarkable—yet that is what the bounty hunter known as Ysrilla Lightstep has done.

Ysrilla is one of the few people resourceful enough to maintain an independent lifestyle and at the same time avoid having those with greater power turn against her. Her reputation has spread across the city-states, both among the common people and in the higher echelons of power, and everyone who knows of her says the same: Ysrilla Lightstep does what she is hired to do, and she is not to be crossed.

Her combat skill, though formidable, is the least of what makes her dangerous. Ysrilla is also one of the most intelligent and cunning individuals on the face of Athas, possessed of a mind capable of matching wits with even the most erudite templar. Many whisper that, if she had been born with the spark of psionics or given training in magic, she would be a sorcerer-king by now.

As a bounty hunter, Ysrilla specializes in hunting down and retrieving (or dispatching) individuals on behalf of her employer. Of course, such hunting often means enduring the harsh landscape of Athas. But Ysrilla is an elf, and elves are among the fastest runners and most skilled travelers on the burning world. Her elven heritage allows her to succeed in a world where many others wouldn't dare travel the sandy wastes just for money; and, in turn, this allows her to charge exorbitant prices for her services, since no one else is seemingly able to do what she does.

One of the factors that contributes to Ysrilla's reputation is her fierce appearance. She almost never removes her horned helm in public, and most people are skeptical of anyone that claims to have seen her face unadorned. She walks about clad in armor and carrying an impressive set of weaponry, enough that anyone of a mind to make disparaging comments about her race or gender usually thinks twice. Despite these accoutrements, she moves quickly and nimbly, and pads her gear with leather straps so that she can move about stealthily without rattling and giving away her position.

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The Rest of the Story

The information above is what most people know about Ysrilla Lightstep—her reputation, what she looks like, and the kind of work she does. Yet all that is only a part of a greater truth: Ysrilla Lightstep is not an individual bounty hunter, but a group of elves who share the name, reputation, and obligations of Ysrilla Lightstep. More than a dozen people act as "Ysrilla" across Athas, making up a sort of secret society that has adopted a single persona instead of acting as an organization of many members.

There is a single elf truly named Ysrilla Lightstep. Born to one of the nomadic elf tribes, her upbringing was difficult, as it is for many female elves. Trapped within her tribe, a virtual slave to the thieving leaders of her caravan, Ysrilla spent much of her youth being treated more as property than as a person. But even at an early age she was intelligent far beyond her kin, and so she watched, waited, endured, and learned. She learned the arts of stealth and long-range scouting from her tribe's scouts; she learned of deception and illusion from the tribe's larcenous members who worked within the city-states; she learned to fight from the tribe's warriors, trading whatever goods she could steal for clandestine training. By the time she had grown to adulthood, Ysrilla had learned much and had plotted her escape. When the time finally came, her exit from her tribe was swift and silent: there one day and gone the next, never to return.

From there, Ysrilla used the skills she had cultivated to find her way in the world, though she was hardly prosperous. She was a fast desert runner, so she could work as a scout or a messenger, but there are many people on the roads who see a lone female as easy prey. She fought in the gladiatorial arenas of Balic and Raam, but those fights were too brutal for her style, and she risked being enslaved if she stayed too long. Even mercenary work guarding caravans was difficult to come by, because those doing the hiring were reluctant to work with an elf, no matter how skilled she might be.

Things changed when Ysrilla met someone with a story much like hers. While she was working as a merchant's guard on the Road of Kings, her group came across a caravan of elves. In that caravan was a young woman who was clearly far more intelligent than the others of her tribe, and the two quickly became friends. It was then that the idea came upon Ysrilla to create the bounty hunter identity; realizing that if she could find more like her, they could leverage their cunning and skill into something that no one else could offer: a search-and-recovery specialist who could travel effortlessly across the wastes of Athas in pursuit of her prey.

Over the next several years, Ysrilla recruited more female elves. She trained them in all the skills she had learned early on, and then she began sending them off to the various city-states and settlements across Athas, each one acting under the name Ysrilla Lightstep. When one Ysrilla takes on a job, rather than dashing out after her quarry, she communicates (through a Sending ritual) with another Ysrilla closer to the target, giving that person the information she needs to take up the chase. To a client, it appears that Ysrilla has pursued the target across the desert when, in truth, it is merely the message that has traveled.

Now, the network of women acting as Ysrilla Lightstep is nearly twenty strong, with members positioned in all the city-states and several major villages and outposts. Each Ysrilla is equipped with identical weapons, armor, and other adornments; two of them standing side by side in full dress would appear identical (apart from slight differences in build and height). It's highly unlikely, however, for an observer to witness such a scene. While one Ysrilla is active, the others put aside their adornments and assume secondary identities until the job is complete, ensuring that two Ysrillas are never seen in the same place at the same time.

Ysrilla Lightstep	**Level 14 Skirmisher**
Medium natural humanoid, elf	XP 1,000
HP 137; **Bloodied** 68	**Initiative** +13
AC 28, **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 27, **Will** 26	**Perception** +16
Speed 7	Low-light vision
Traits	
Wild Step	
Ysrilla ignores difficult terrain when she shifts.	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Scimitar** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +19 vs. AC	
Hit: 4d8 + 4 damage.	
⸸ **Curved Bone Dagger** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +19 vs. AC	
Hit: 4d4 + 4 damage, and ongoing 10 damage (save ends).	
⸸ **Two-Weapon Fighting** (weapon) ✦ **Recharge** when first bloodied	
Effect: Ysrilla uses *scimitar* and *curved bone dagger* against the same target.	
⸸ **Show Some Respect!** ✦ **Recharge** if the power misses	
Effect: Ysrilla shifts up to her speed and makes the following attack once at any point during the movement.	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +19 vs. AC	
Hit: 4d8 + 4 damage, and the target is dazed until the end of its next turn and falls prone.	
Move Actions	
Tactical Retreat ✦ **Encounter**	
Effect: Ysrilla ends any effect on herself that is slowing or immobilizing her, and then shifts up to her speed. If she is not adjacent to an enemy at the end of this first shift, she can shift up to her speed a second time.	
Skills Bluff +15, Perception +16, Stealth +16	
Str 11 (+7) **Dex** 19 (+11) **Wis** 19 (+11)	
Con 17 (+10) **Int** 23 (+13) **Cha** 16 (+10)	
Alignment unaligned **Languages** Common, Elven	
Equipment bone armor, curved bone dagger, bone scimitar	

About the Author

Rodney Thompson, an advanced designer for Dungeons & Dragons R&D at Wizards of the Coast, is from Chattanooga, Tennessee. His credits for the D&D game include the *Dark Sun Campaign Setting* and the *Dark Sun Creature Catalog*™, *Monster Vault*, *Player's Option: Heroes of the Feywild*, and *Lords of Waterdeep*™.

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